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# THE APOSTLES' CREED

AN EXAMINATION OF ITS HISTORY  
AND  
AN EXPOSITION OF ITS CONTENTS

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BY  
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## PREFACE

THIS volume is not written primarily for scholars, but for the mass of intelligent people who in public worship reverently recite the Apostles' Creed as a confession of their faith. Many have not the time or facilities for investigating larger sources of information in regard to its history and meaning. The work is designed to correct erroneous opinions as to the origin and history of the Creed, and to strengthen and confirm the reader in the New Testament doctrines specially set forth in this earliest and most generally held of all confessions of faith. There is inspiration in the fact that by this "faith which was once delivered to the saints" we are united to the Great Historic Church of all the Christian ages.

HENRY WHEELER.

Ocean Grove, N. J.



The Christian faith is the perfection of human intelligence.—*Coleridge* (*Aids to Reflection*).

The Apostles' Creed is the common bond of Greek, Roman, and evangelical Christendom.—*Schaff*.

If the differences of the Christian Churches are strange and tragical, their agreements are fundamental and eternal.—*Fitchett*.

# The Creed



1. I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth;
2. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary;
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was cruci-  
fied, dead, and buried;
5. He descended into hell; the third day he rose  
again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the  
right hand of God the Father Almighty;
7. From thence he shall come to judge the  
quick and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Ghost;
9. The holy catholic Church, the communion  
of saints;
10. The forgiveness of sins;
11. The resurrection of the body;
12. And the life everlasting. Amen.

## PRELIMINARY

### I. THE NEW TESTAMENT FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES' CREED

It cannot be shown that a formulated creed was known to the apostles; had there been, it would have been found in their writings. There are, however, clear indications of some form of Christian doctrine to which candidates for baptism were required to assent. The Creed has its roots in Christ's command, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28. 19). Some profession of faith was therefore required. The resurrection of Christ was laid down by Paul as an article of faith necessary to salvation. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10. 9, R. V.). In 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4 (R. V.) Paul gives a brief outline of the

truths delivered to that Church which they were to "keep in memory" lest they should "have believed in vain." "For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." This includes three great facts: (1) That Christ's death was a genuine historical fact. (2) That Christ was buried; a real human body being laid in the tomb. (3) That Christ had been raised from the dead. From these facts we draw the following conclusions: Christ's death is an atonement for sin, and opens the way for its forgiveness; his resurrection assures the resurrection of all men. This brief and simple creed includes the most essential truths of the Christian faith.

1 Tim. 3. 16 (R. V.) is thought to contain a part of an early creed or hymn:

He who was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen of angels,  
Preached among the nations,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up into glory.

Paul says to the Romans, "Ye became obe-

dient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered" (Rom. 6. 17, R. V.). To Timothy he says, "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1. 13, R. V.). To the Galatians he wrote, "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6. 16, R. V.). Jude exhorts the Church "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3, R. V.)—the system of doctrines and morals which had been delivered to them, "once for all," excluding all additions, diminutions, and modifications.

Every article of the Apostles' Creed was held in apostolic times, though not formulated in the words and order of the present text. It would be possible to construct the whole of the Creed from Saint Paul's writings alone. There are many indications of a formulary of faith, in substance the same, though varying in form, in many organized congregations or churches in the apostolic age.

The early addition to the New Testament text in Acts 8. 37 affords an example of a

required confession of faith. "The eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.* And he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*" (Acts 8. 37).

Though we may not use the above italicized words as an inspired proof-text, we may use them to show that the Church at an early time required some such profession of faith before baptism.

At Pentecost, in answer to the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2. 38).

## II. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE CREED

"THE Creed was not the product of one man or of one day"; while it had its foundation in the great commission of Christ to his disciples, its latest addition was not made until about A. D. 650. For many centuries it was supposed to have been written by the apostles, and this is now the claim of some Roman Catholic authors, but the claim is without



foundation. An early tradition in regard to this was made current by Rufinus about A. D. 400.

The tradition says of the apostles: "That being on the eve therefore of departure from one another, they first mutually agreed upon a standard of their future preaching, lest haply, when separated, they might in any instance vary in the statements which they should make to those whom they should invite to believe in Christ. Being all therefore met together, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, they composed, as we have said, this brief formulary of their future preaching, each contributing his several sentences to one common summary; and they ordained that the rules thus framed should be given to those who believe."<sup>1</sup>

Reference is made to this tradition by Jerome, Cassian, and other ancient writers, and for centuries was generally believed. The author of the sermons *de Tempore* (falsely ascribed to Augustine) pretends to give the sentence contributed by each apostle, as follows:

Peter: I believe in God the Father Almighty.

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Creed, section ii.

John: Maker of heaven and earth.

James: And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord.

Andrew: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

Philip: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

Thomas: He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead.

Bartholomew: He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Matthew: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

James, the son of Alphæus: I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church.

Simon Zelotes: The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins.

Jude, the brother of James: The resurrection of the flesh.

Matthias: The life everlasting.

These traditions are not supported by evidence. Rome built up the legend of the apostolic origin of her old Creed, then, under stress of Arianism, dropped it for the Nicene Creed, which she used for some centuries, and her old Creed was well-nigh forgotten. Then, under

the influence of the Franks, who had become masters of Rome, she adopted their confession, which was the Creed of the Gallic Church, and the same as we now have. This contained the clauses which the old Roman Creed did not have, "He descended into hell," "The communion of saints," "The life everlasting." The Gallic Creed was the old Roman Creed enlarged. To this Rome transferred the legend of its strictly apostolic origin, which had never been claimed for it. This transference called for a new division of its articles among the twelve apostles, since it contained more than the old Creed. It was not till nearly four hundred years after Christ that the framing of the Creed by the apostles was named in any writing now extant. The ancient Creeds of both East and West, though the same in substance, were not the same in words, which could not have been the case had they been taken from some authoritative form. It is also well known that for some centuries the bishops and other authorities would not permit the Creed to be committed to writing. It is absurd to suppose that the apostles wrote it, as in its present form it did not appear earlier than the seventh century.

## III. THE NAME OF THE CREED

No specific name for the Christian faith was in universal use in early Christian times. But the earliest writers used certain phrases easily understood as signifying the confession adhered to by all members of the Christian Society. These confessions, though the same in substance, differed in name and form. The Greek Creeds were the earliest and originated in the East. This is easily accounted for by the fact that Jerusalem and Antioch were the first Christian centers, and the gospel was first promulgated in Greek-speaking countries.

The Creed was not then known by the Greeks as the Apostles' Creed. The writings of the Greek fathers show that essentially the same confession which the Westerns placed before all others as the actual composition of the apostles, was also used in the Eastern churches as a baptismal confession, but was not known as the Apostles' Creed. By Rufinus it is called "The Rule of Preaching"; by Salvian, "The Gift of Salvation"; by Cassian, "The Faith of the Catholic Sacrament"; by Ambrose, "The Seal of the Heart and a Military Sacrament." The term commonly

employed by Irenæus, Tertullian, Novation, and Jerome, in speaking of the deviations of heretics from the common articles of the Christian faith contained in the Creeds of the church is "The Rule [*Regula*] of Faith." The Latin *Regula* is the equivalent of *κανών* (canon), a favorite name for the Creed among the Greek fathers. The Greek word means a straight rod or rule used as a measure. Thus, when used to designate the Creed, it indicated the rule or standard by which orthodoxy and heresy were to be examined and judged.

None of these names became universal; later the term "symbol" was more generally used. This word is first found in the writings of Saint Cyprian, bishop of Carthage. There is a difference of opinion as to its derivation, some taking it from *σύμβολον*, a sign, token, or watchword; others from *σύμβολή*, a collation, or a casting together, as of a contribution into a common treasury, or as in a common feast where each supplied a portion. The former view sees the origin of the name in military custom as soldiers distinguish friend from foe by signs or passwords. Those who accept the tradition that each of the apostles contributed

an article to the Creed take the latter view of the origin of the name.

Sir Peter King thinks the word is derived from the religious services (*sacra*) of the heathen, whose adherents when initiated had certain signs or marks given them called symbola, by which they recognized each other and were admitted to their assemblies, and to the worship of the god whose symbols they had received. This opinion gains strength, perhaps, from the fact that the Creed was studiously kept from the pagan world by the early Christians, and was not made known to the catechumens until just before their baptism, when it was delivered to them in connection with the Lord's prayer as the secret note or sign by which Christians in all parts of the world should know and be known.

Saint Cyprian says, "The sacrament of faith," which means the Creed, "was not to be profaned or divulged." To justify this he quoted Matt. 7. 6, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." Saint Ambrose exhorts the catechumens to conceal the Christian mysteries, and to use care lest by any

incautiousness they reveal the secrets of the Creed or the Lord's Prayer.

Petrus Chrysologus, archbishop of Ravenna (A. D. 400), gives frequent and earnest exhortations to hide the Creed from public knowledge, that the unworthy and profane might not have this secret of God with them.<sup>1</sup>

Catechumens preparing for baptism committed the Creed to memory. Augustine, instructing them, said, "But when you have learnt it, that you may not forget it, say it every day when you rise, . . . for repetition is useful, lest forgetfulness steal over you."<sup>2</sup>

It has been thought the name *Symbolum Apostolicum* was given the Creed after the tradition became extant that the apostles met and composed it in order to secure unanimity in Christian teachings.

It has also been suggested that the Creed gained its name in the following way: Many of the Eastern Churches had been founded by the apostles, and in some of them an apostle had long resided, as in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus. In this respect one

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<sup>1</sup> Sermons lviii, lix.

<sup>2</sup> Sermon to Competentes.

was no more distinguished than another; but in the West none could claim this distinction save Rome, so that when Christians of the West spoke of an apostolic church, they meant Rome. Their bishop was the apostolic bishop, their see, the apostolic see, and the Creed they used was the apostolic, or Apostles' Creed.

But it has not maintained its name in later centuries upon the unhistorical tradition of its origin, nor by the fact that Rome was the only Western Church founded by the apostles, but because it is a beautiful, true, and comprehensive statement of the great fundamental facts of Christianity as found in the writings of the apostles.

#### IV. THE APOSTLES' CREED IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

It is interesting to trace in the writings of the early Church fathers the development and growth of that "form of sound words" which ultimately became the Apostles' Creed. It could hardly be otherwise than that we should find in their writings single expressions of Christian faith, such as those that compose this formula; but when several of them are



found combined as a statement of Christian belief they constitute to a certain extent a Christian creed. We find something approaching it in the first half of the second century.

Aristides, an Athenian philosopher (A. D. 126), wrote an apology for the Christians and sent it to the emperor Hadrian. It contains the following passage, which reads like a quotation from a Christian Creed of that period: "Now, the Christians trace their origin from the Lord Jesus Christ. And he is acknowledged by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of the Most High God, who came down from heaven for the salvation of men. And being born of a pure virgin, unbegotten and immaculate, he assumed flesh and revealed himself among men that he might recall them to himself from their wandering after many gods. And having accomplished his wonderful dispensation, by a voluntary choice, he tasted death on the cross, fulfilling an august dispensation. After three days he came to life again and ascended into heaven. And if you would read, O king, you may judge the glory of his presence from the Holy Gospel writing, as it is called by themselves. He had twelve disciples who, after his ascension to heaven, went forth into the prov-

inces of the whole world and declared his greatness.”<sup>1</sup>

Justin Martyr mentions the baptismal formula in use in his time (A. D. 140): “As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to live accordingly, . . . are brought to us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they there receive the washing with water.”<sup>2</sup>

There is no evidence of anything so formal as the Apostles' Creed until the time of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons about A. D. 178. He gives almost every article of the Creed, and declares it to have been universal in his time. He says: “The church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in One Jesus Christ the

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<sup>1</sup> Apology, chap. xv.

<sup>2</sup> First Apology, chap. lxi.

Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and his (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father, to 'gather all things in one,' and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race. . . . She also believes these points (of doctrine) just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth."<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian, of North Africa (A. D. 200), gives in part the same statement of doctrine, but not in the form of the Creed. He says, "Now, with regard to this rule of faith—that we may from this point acknowledge what it is that we defend—it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that he is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through his own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called his

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<sup>1</sup> Against Heresies, Book I, chap. x.

Son, *and*, under the name of God, was seen 'in divers manners' by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth he preached the new law, and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, he rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, he sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life, and of the heavenly promises."<sup>1</sup>

Various errors appeared at a very early period, even while the apostles were still on earth, and at a later time these rapidly increased, so that a definite rule of faith was deemed necessary in order to preserve purity of doctrine. Origen (A. D. 230) speaks of this: "Since many, however, of those who profess to believe in Christ differ from each other, not only in small and trifling matters, but also on subjects of the highest importance, as,

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<sup>1</sup> Against Heresies, chap. xiii.

for example, regarding God, or our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit; it seems on that account necessary first of all to fix a definite limit and to lay down an unmistakable rule regarding each one of these, and then to pass to the investigation of other points.”<sup>1</sup> Origen then proceeds to give the particular points clearly delivered by the apostles: *First*. That there is one God the Creator of all things. *Secondly*. That Jesus Christ was the Son of God, became incarnate, born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit, that he did truly suffer, and die, and rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. *Thirdly*. That the Holy Spirit was associated in honor and dignity with the Father and the Son. He leaves the mysteries to be determined by a careful investigation and an appeal to the Sacred Scriptures.

We have the oldest form of the Creed in the old Roman symbol, supposed to have originated between the years A. D. 150 and A. D. 175. Caspari assumes that it came to Rome “on the boundary-line between the apostolic and the sub-apostolic age, substantially in the form which it has in the old Roman Creed,

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<sup>1</sup> De Principiis, sections ii, iii.

and probably from Asia Minor, from the Johannine Circle, which may well have been its birthplace.”<sup>1</sup>

Zahn agrees with Caspari as to the place of its origin, and so still later does Dr. Sanday; but there is a strong array of scholarship against this view. Harnack, Kattenbusch, and Dr. McGiffert contend that Rome was its birthplace. Harnack says: “During the period between C. 250 and C. 460, and probably still later, the Roman Church used in her services a Creed which she held in the highest honor; to which she would allow no additions to be made, which she believed to be directly descended from the twelve apostles in the form in which she possessed it, and whereof she conceived that Peter had brought it to Rome.”<sup>2</sup> “We may safely say that the Creed dates from the post-apostolic age, and from Rome, the mother Church of the West.”<sup>3</sup>

The place and exact time of its composition may not be known, and are not specially important. The Roman Church was its custodian for many centuries, and the center

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<sup>1</sup> Caspari Quellen, iii, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Nineteenth Century Magazine, July, 1893, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

from which it went forth to all branches of the Western Church. The language in which the original text was found was Greek; that was the language in common use among the Christians of Rome in the second century. Caspari, Kattenbusch, McGiffert, and most other scholars are agreed that the Greek text is the original and the Latin the translation.

Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra (A. D. 340), is an important witness to the old Roman Symbol. Through the influence of the Arians he was persecuted and accused of heresy. He wrote a letter to Julius, bishop of Rome, in which he asserted his orthodox views, giving the Creed as the basis of his preaching. This letter and Creed are found in the Treatise on Heresies of Saint Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis. The Creed was supposed to be the local Creed used by Marcellus in the Church of Ancyra, but it was first pointed out by Archbishop Ussher that it was not an Eastern Creed, but the Creed of the Roman Church, and probably adopted by Marcellus as proof of his orthodoxy. The Creed is as follows:

1. I believe in God Almighty.
2. And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord.

3. Born of the Holy Ghost and Mary the Virgin.

4. Under Pontius Pilate crucified and buried.

5. And the third day rose again from the dead.

6. Ascended into heaven.

7. And sitteth on the right hand of the Father.

8. From whence he cometh to judge quick and dead.

9. And in the Holy Ghost.

10. Holy Church.

11. Forgiveness of sins.

12. Resurrection of the flesh.

The Creed, he says, was "the faith he had been taught by his forefathers in God out of the Sacred Scriptures, and which he had himself been accustomed to preach in the Church of God."

Augustine (A. D. 354-430) wrote a sermon to the catechumens on the Rule of Faith, or Creed, from which we may gather the articles of the Creed which were held by the churches in North Africa at the end of the fourth century. They are as follows:

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty,



2. And in Jesus Christ, the Son of God the only begotten of the Father, or, his only Son our Lord,
3. Who was born through the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary.
4. Who, under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.
5. On the third day he rose again from the dead.
6. He ascended into heaven.
7. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father.
8. From thence he will come and judge the living and the dead.
9. (And I believe) in the Holy Spirit.
10. I believe the Holy Church,
11. The forgiveness of sins.
12. The resurrection of the flesh.
13. The life everlasting.<sup>1</sup>

Here all the articles of the Creed as we have it now are named except "the descent into Hades" and "the communion of saints."

Rufinus, a writer of the latter part of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth, wrote a commentary on the Creed. His work is important, since it evidences the form held by the Italian churches of that time; it also

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<sup>1</sup> Sermon on the Creed.

shows the variations in the several churches. His formula differs from that of Rome and from that of Augustine, though he and Augustine were contemporaries. This makes it plain that churches in different countries held Creeds that differed in form of expression, and in minor details, while holding the same essential truths. Rufinus gives us the Creed of Aquileia, a town in Italy, formerly so important in ecclesiastical matters as to be called a second Rome. The following is the Creed with the added words in *italics*:

1. I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
*invisible and impassible.*
2. And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our  
Lord;
3. Who was born from the Holy Ghost, of  
the Virgin Mary;
4. Was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and  
buried;
5. He descended to hell; on the third day  
he rose again from the dead.
6. He ascended to the heavens; he sitteth  
at the right hand of the Father.
7. Thence he is to come to judge the quick  
and the dead.
8. And in the Holy Ghost.

9. The Holy Church.
10. The remission of sins.
11. The resurrection of *this* flesh.<sup>1</sup>

This Creed differs from that of Rome in two particulars that would seem important. To the first article the words "*invisible and impassible*" were added. These were in contradiction to the heresy of the Patripassions and Sabellians. The Patripassions taught that the Father was so intimately united with the man Christ, his Son, that he suffered with him the anguish of an afflicted life, and the torments of an ignominious death. The Sabellians taught that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were merely names for the different modes under which one and the same Person operated or was manifest.

The Aquileian Creed contains also the article on the descent into Hades.

The form most nearly corresponding to the present text was that of the Church of Rome, though that lacked the three articles, the "descent into Hades," the "communion of saints," and the "life everlasting." It appears evident that at that early period every church was at liberty to express the fundamental articles

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Creed.

of the Christian faith in the way best suited to its own circumstances. The various churches did not always employ the same words or ask the same questions of the candidates for baptism; sometimes omitting some or adding others, when the appearance of heresies gave occasion to do so. On this Sir Peter King justly observes: "When any article was added to the Creed, it was not the introduction of a new point, but the vindicating and settling of an old one, and a constant perpetual profession and declaration of that truth, which before was only arbitrarily and uncertainly expressed, seeing everyone, before those contrary errors arose, was supposed firmly to believe and own it."<sup>1</sup>

It is a singular fact that while Rome guarded her old Creed so jealously from change or addition, she dropped it from the liturgy at the end of the fifth century, and for some two or three hundred years used the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed in her baptismal formula. Caspari supposed this to have been done to meet the pressure of Gothic Arianism under Odoacer (C. 476-493). Dr. A. E. Burn cites, as another explanation, the

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<sup>1</sup> History of the Apostles' Creed, p. 41.

fact that during the time of the Byzantine influence the baptismal Creed of Constantinople was offered to Greek-speaking catechumens as the equivalent of the Roman Creed, whose Greek text had long been forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the cause of its use, in process of time circumstances changed. Rome was free from Constantinople, Arianism was dying out, and an anti-Arian Creed was no longer needed. Rome then dropped the Nicene Creed and adopted a shorter confession—not her old one, but one that had grown from that—and that is the one now in use. The exact time when this occurred is not known. It can be shown that for a time the use of both forms ran parallel. Dr. Burn places the date of the adoption in Rome of the form we now use as prior to A. D. 700, and infers that from Rome it was sent out through Boniface and other Benedictine missionaries, as afterward under the direction of Charles the Great all over the West. It gained general currency in the West after the eighth century.

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<sup>1</sup> The Apostles' Creed, p. 52.

## ARTICLE I

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,  
MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

### I BELIEVE IN GOD

THIS is a personal and specific declaration of faith in God. It demands a prayerful self-examination. To be able to say "I believe in God" is a blessed privilege and a delightful experience. It opens the way to immeasurable heights beyond our present conceptions.

We may well regard with compassion and solicitude those who say they do not believe in God. This unbelief does not always mean the same thing or spring from the same cause. It may mean the craving of a logical intellect for clearer proof; it may be a revolt against moral law. In either case it is an incalculable loss to the soul. Unbelief is not a condition of rest, but of conflict; while it remains man is never free from a yearning for that which he cannot obtain. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11. 6).

A faith which brings a reward satisfying to the soul includes a firm assent of the mind and a sincere trust of the heart, and produces love and obedience. This faith does not spring from the natural working of the mind; it is a divine conviction as well as a logical conclusion. The Holy Spirit does not endue the soul with a new faculty, but quickens and directs an existing one, to which, at the same time, it presents an appropriate object. This faith is a personal act, guided by reason, intensified by feeling, and directed toward God.

Our conceptions of God must be imperfect because of human limitations. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. But some of his attributes "are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity" (Rom. 1. 20, R. V.).

This article is properly placed first in the declaration of Christian belief, as all other articles of religious faith must grow out of it. A soul that has no God can have no reasonable hope. An admission of God's existence is the first condition of a holy life and of possible worship. An atheist cannot adore, trust, or love God, or approach him in prayer.

Faith in God is the foundation of, and the stimulus to, advancement in mental and moral attainments, and as such has a moral and practical value. It paves the way to faith in every other article in the Creed. If mind, heart, and will do not assent to this, all others must be discarded.

A survey of the heavens connected with the more minute studies of natural history inspires a sense of the divine. In the great truth of God's existence nature and revelation agree. Of the presence of God in nature we have a superabundance of proof; the whole universe is full of divine glory, and the received doctrines of natural religion become the basis of the Christian fabric. Some knowledge of God is found wherever there is intelligence to grasp it. Nature lies open to the inspection of all; attention and reflection only are necessary to read its testimony of divine authorship.

From the primitive ages men have been impressed with the evidences of wisdom and power found in the works of creation. From these man was able to infer the existence of a Supreme Being.

Our faith includes the *unity* of God. The



emphatic "*one*" of the Nicene Creed is in contradistinction to the simpler form of that of the apostles. The Eastern churches almost universally delivered the article, "I believe in *one* God the Father Almighty." This was inserted against the teachings of the Gnostics, who interposed lesser divinities between God the Creator and man. For a like reason the Unity of God occupies a large place in the teachings of modern missionaries among polytheistic races. We believe in *one* God, and but one living and true God. There can be but one Being who is almighty, infinite, and eternal.

#### THE FATHER ALMIGHTY

The first article of the Creed confesses the Fatherhood of God. As to the signification of this idea as used by the writers of the second century, Harnack gives the following: "It is true that if we examine the contemporary ecclesiastical literature, we no longer find in it the full evangelical understanding of the name 'Father'; as a rule, when the authors of it call God 'Father' they only think of him as the Father of the universe. The expression is not even frequent with them. God is gen-

erally called 'The Lord' (δέσποτης), or the 'Creator.' It is all the more welcome that we do find it in the Creed. Even though the author himself did not probably attribute the same meaning to the word as it bears in Matt. 11. 25 and in Rom. 8. 15, he does not stand in the way of such a meaning."<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the Trinity was the accepted faith of the Church before the middle of the second century, though the word "Father" does not appear in the first article of the Creed in its earliest form.

Justin (A. D. 140) wrote, "The Father and the Son, and the prophetic Spirit we adore."<sup>2</sup> Irenæus (A. D. 173) said, "The Church believes in one God the Father . . . and in one Christ Jesus the Son of God; and in the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup> Tertullian (A. D. 200) said, "For the very Church itself is properly and principally the Spirit himself, in whom is the Trinity of the one Divinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup> The word "Father" is frequently used by the Ante-Nicene fathers in the sense of *Father* of the world, that is,

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<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth Century Magazine, July, 1893, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> First Apology, chap. xli.

<sup>3</sup> Against Heresies, Book I, chap. x.

<sup>4</sup> On Modesty, chap. xxi.

its Creator, Author, or Source. Justin speaks of giving "praise and glory to the *Father of the universe*, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> It is not to be understood that it is thus used to the exclusion of reference to the Father as the first Person in the Holy Trinity. The Apostles' Creed is the expression of the original baptismal formula given by our Lord, and a true understanding of it must begin from this point. "The expansion was so contrived as to describe more closely the three members of the baptismal formula—'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' The Christian community felt the need of plainly defining them so as to confess before all men what she possessed in them, and through her faith in them."<sup>2</sup>

In this formula the title "Father" must be taken in connection with the word "Son," which immediately follows.

In the Creed of Aquileia the word "Father" appears in the first article, and its meaning was thus defined by Rufinus: "When you hear the word 'Father' you must understand by this the Father of a Son, which Son is the

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<sup>1</sup> First Apology, chap. lxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, 1893, p. 167.

image of the aforesaid substance.”<sup>1</sup> Augustine gives the same illustration.<sup>2</sup> After referring to the various senses in which the word *Father* may be applied to God, Bishop Pearson says: “And so at last we come unto the most singular and eminent paternal relation, unto ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore’ (2 Cor. 11. 31) ; *the Father* of him and of us, but not the Father of us as of him.”<sup>3</sup>

We cannot read the Gospels without being impressed with the fact that a mysterious relationship existed between God and Jesus Christ that does not exist between God and any other being. It is not a relation of superior and dependent, but one of Father and Son, equal in nature and power. Here is an illustration: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11. 27).

While the article teaches the relation between God and Christ, we need not confine

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<sup>1</sup> Comment on the Creed, section iv.

<sup>2</sup> See King on the Creed, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> On the Creed, p. 46.

ourselves to this mysterious region of thought. It teaches the relations of God to mankind. His gracious, compassionate, loving character is revealed to us by Jesus Christ. From "the bosom of the Father he hath declared him." Out of the very heart of God comes the revelation of what he is to man. Aside from the testimony of Christ in these respects, God is unknowable.

#### MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

This is the last clause added to the Creed, and does not appear till about A. D. 650. It was borrowed from the East. The words are found in the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian. Irenæus said of the Church, "She believes in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."<sup>1</sup> It is a scriptural phrase and cannot be objectionable to any Christian mind. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1. 1). This clause of the article excludes from Christian belief errors of both ancient and modern times. It opposes the Gnostics, who interposed between God and the world of matter a Demiurge, to whom they attributed cre-

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<sup>1</sup> Against Heresies, chap. x.

ative powers. It opposes pantheism, which identifies God with the material universe, and asserts that God is all, and that all is God. It teaches that God is the Maker of all things visible and invisible, material bodies and pure spirits. "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1. 17). He holds the universe together, preserves its permanence, and maintains its order as its sustainer. The article says nothing of the processes of creation; this is left for human investigation. It reminds us that God is "not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17. 27, 28).

## ARTICLE II

### AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD

A DECLARATION of faith in God the Father Almighty puts us with all who acknowledge one God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe. There are many millions of Jews, Mohammedans, and others who confess this faith. Belief in the second article of our Creed takes us an important step in advance of this. We believe in God, "and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord." Faith in God as Supreme Ruler opens no avenue to him as a Saviour of sinners. Such a faith leaves man in darkness and trouble. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2. 19). Man is conscious of a great need; the soul cries out for a God of sympathy and love, an Almighty Saviour. Because of this need faith in Christ is emphasized. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6. 29). This faith differentiates the Christian from all other monotheists. He

believes in one God, but in three Persons in one God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

#### AND IN JESUS CHRIST

God, who is infinite in wisdom, gave his Son a name that would comport with his work in the redemption of mankind. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." The word "Jesus" is in Greek form the same as "Joshua" in Hebrew, and implies "Saviour." Bible names are often typical and significant. When the time came for the initiatory rite into the Jewish Church, his name was called Jesus, and he was known among his people as "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1. 45). It was the redemptive work of Christ that distinguished him, and for that, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2. 9).

The work of salvation is attributed to Jesus in both prophecy and history. Of Bethlehem Micah said, "Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5. 2). The angel said to the wondering shepherds, "Unto you is born this



day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2. 11). So Paul at Antioch, "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13. 23). God sent his Son into the world that "the world through him might be saved" (John 3. 17). "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9. 26). Men have sought throughout the world to find a sacrifice for sin, but none was ever found that would wash out its stain or ease the conscience of its guilt. Nothing but a lamb from God's own fold could take away the sin of the world. "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John 2. 2, R. V.).

This salvation by Jesus Christ is an experience into which millions have entered. The witnessing and converting power of the Church was present at the first Pentecostal baptism, and demonstrated the power of Jesus to save.

"Jesus" was the God-given name. The word "Christ" is a Greek translation of the word "Messiah," and is used as the official title of Jesus. It is first found in the apocryphal

book, 2 Esdras 7. 29, "After these years shall my Son Christ die." It is not a proper name, but the designation of an office, that is, Jesus *the* Christ. In process of time the word came to be used as a strictly personal designation of our Lord and Saviour. The words "Messiah," "Christ," "Anointed" have the same signification, and are equivalent to "consecrated," "sacred," "set apart."

Jesus Christ was set apart, consecrated to the work of human redemption by the act of God, who gave his only begotten Son for that purpose, and by his own act when he "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2. 6).

The visible consecration was by the baptism in Jordan and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him. He was then "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power" as Prophet, Priest, and King. These three offices were recognized by the early Church. Eusebius said, "And we have been told also that certain prophets themselves became, by the act of anointing, Christs in type, so that all these have reference to the true Christ, the divinely inspired and heavenly Son, who is the only High Priest of all, and the only King of every

creature, and the Father's only supreme Prophet of prophets."<sup>1</sup>

These three offices are attributed to Christ in his relations to man, as his Redeemer and Mediator, and gloriously did he illustrate the nature and discharge the duties that belong to them. When God gave the law amid the thunderings of Sinai the people were afraid and desired some way less terrible in which they could receive the word of God. God graciously heard their prayer, and said, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Moses], and will put my words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18. 18). Jesus was the mouth-piece for God. He was God's WORD as well as God's Son.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1. 1, 2). A Son stands in closer relationship to God than a prophet, so the revelations of the Son were far deeper and more glorious than those of the prophets. The Son is God manifested, "He

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<sup>1</sup> Church History, Book I, chap. iii.

that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14. 9). "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" (John 7. 16). "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8. 28).

Jesus was the Prophet of prophets. When he proclaimed the kingdom of God had come, and confirmed his word by miracles, he did a prophet's work, and he was, and is, The Prophet, the revealer of God in the absolute sense.

We believe in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Levitical priesthood, imperfect, transient, passed away, but Jesus Christ is a true and eternal High Priest. His Priesthood is not based upon a transient enactment for an office limited by an earthly existence, but after the power of an immortal life. And "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7. 24, 25).

The kingly office also belongs to Christ. The crown of thorns cannot be separated from his death. So from the crown of thorns the crown of kingly dignity and power is inseparable. When in the days of his humiliation he was

recognized and proclaimed as the "Son of David," the expected "Messiah King," he accepted the title. The fulfillment of his kingly mission took place in a manner entirely opposite to that which the people had expected; it culminated at the moment when he declared unto Pilate that he was King, and thereupon received the crown of thorns (John 18. 37; 19. 2).

#### HIS ONLY SON

After the name that designates the office of the divine Saviour we have that which expresses his close relation to God the Father—"his only Son." How is this name to be understood? The word "son" has various significations in common language and in the Holy Scriptures. In the latter it is applied to angels and believers. It is used metaphorically to indicate a disciple or follower. Paul speaks of Timothy as "my own son in the faith," and Peter speaks of "Marcus my son." When applied to Christ it is used in a very definite and exclusive sense. "We are not to understand by it anything that is human or common, but such a sonship as is divine, proper, and peculiar to him, and is not communicable or attributable to any other, being his Father's

only Son; that is, such a Son, or a Son in such a manner as never any other is or was.”<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus called himself the Son of God the Jews believed he claimed equality with God. The Messiah is designated in prophecy as the Son of God, “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psa. 2. 7). Paul applies this directly to Jesus, “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13. 33).

This relation Jesus claimed for himself, and for this reason the Jews accused him of blasphemy. “The high priest . . . said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: . . . Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy” (Matt. 26. 63-65). For this they sought to kill him. “We have a law, and by our law

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<sup>1</sup> King's History of the Creed, p. 128.

he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19. 7. See Lev. 24. 16). The Divine Father bore witness to his Sonship, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17).

Jesus is the Son of God in a unique sense. He is the "only begotten Son." Yet, different from all created beings who have their existence from God and their life in him, the Son, being uncreated, has life as the Father has life, in himself, not dependent, but self-existent and eternal. "The communication of the divine Essence which constitutes him Son," says Kidd, "is not to be thought of as an event that once took place; for then the Father would not have been always Father, nor the Son always Son. It is to be thought of, rather, as an 'eternal generation,' by which is meant an unchangeable relation or fact of the divine nature, the evidence of which is to be sought in what the Son has told us of the perfect intimacy between himself and the Father."<sup>1</sup>

Christians of the early centuries accepted the deity of Christ. Ignatius (A. D. 30-107) wrote: "I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom, . . . being

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<sup>1</sup> On the Thirty-nine Articles, vol. I, p. 71.

fully persuaded in very truth, with respect to our Lord Jesus Christ, he was the Son of God, 'the first born of every creature,' God the Word, the only begotten Son."<sup>1</sup>

The attributes and moral excellences ascribed to the Father are ascribed to the Son; in the unity of the Godhead Christ is God in manifestation, redemption, intercession, and judgment.

The fact that the Saviour of mankind is the only begotten Son of God is most ennobling to man. Man is honored and uplifted in his own view, and in that of all creation, by having the very Son of God as his merciful Saviour. "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2. 4-7). To be redeemed from sin and death by God's only Son and to be exalted to the *heavenlies* is a depth of mercy of God and a height of honor for man that must astonish the pure beings of the universe.

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<sup>1</sup> Epistles to the Smyrnæans.



## OUR LORD

The title of "Lord" is frequently given to Jesus Christ by the New Testament writers. "The Lord then answered him, and said" (Luke 13. 15). "When therefore the Lord knew" (John 4. 1). Once Jesus claimed it for himself, "If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them" (Matt. 21. 3). As his divine character became more deeply impressed upon the minds of the apostles, the more frequently they use this term, and apparently with an intenser meaning. After the resurrection all doubts were removed. At Pentecost Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2. 36).

Saint Paul speaks of Christ as "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2. 8). This is a title infinitely transcending all the rulers of the world. Saint John in the Apocalypse saw him, "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19. 16).

In our language the word "Lord" signifies a master or governor, one having supreme

power or authority. Universal dominion is promised to the Messiah: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him" (Psa. 72. 8-11). The Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head is moving on toward the fulfillment of the promise or declaration, "The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11. 15, R. V.).

The term "*Our Lord*" is used frequently by all the Church fathers, not as a mere title of courtesy: it was a name representing a Person to whose glory they had consecrated every faculty of body and mind, for whose honor they were ready at any moment to die, and for this, in the first three centuries, thousands suffered death.

If the question is asked, "What think ye of Christ?" the Christian response is, "He is our Lord; he holds sway over the whole human race." "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8. 6). If Jesus

Christ was what some modern critics conclude he was, we could not regard him as supreme, and pledge him loyalty and affection. Though he were the most remarkable man that ever lived, we could not call him our Lord in the sense of the Apostles' Creed. "If he was what Saint Peter and Saint John and Saint Paul and Saint Augustine and Venerable Bede, and millions of holy men and women living and departed have believed him, felt him, even (as they would say) known him to be, then the confession of him as 'Our Lord' would be for them at once the simplest expression of faith and the truest expression of allegiance."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Goodwin, *The Foundation of the Creed*, p. 99.

### ARTICLE III

#### WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST, BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

THE subject of this article is of such a nature as to demand the most reverential thought and feeling. "For this birth was a new birth given to this world, and rightly new. For he who was the only Son in heaven is by consequence the only Son on earth, and was uniquely born, born as no other was or ever will be."<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST

This article in the ancient Creed differs somewhat from the present form, but the meaning is the same. Marcellus gives it, "Born of the Holy Ghost and Mary the Virgin." Rufinus: "Who was born from the Holy Ghost, and of the Virgin Mary." Augustine: "Born of the Holy Ghost, and of the Virgin Mary." No specific mention is made of the conception in the above, but the word "born"

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<sup>1</sup> Rufinus, Comment on The Apostles' Creed, section ix.

carries with it the idea of conception and generation as well as that of nativity.

The phrase "was conceived" (*conceptus est*) first appeared in the Confession of the bishops of the orthodox Council of Ariminum in A. D. 359. Symbols ascribed to Bishop Damasus of Rome, Faustus of Riez, and Cæsarius of Arles also give it thus, and after the sixth century the phrase is common in Gallic forms of the Creed.<sup>1</sup> Dr. McGiffert is of the opinion that heresy had nothing to do with its addition to the Creed.

The absence of the word "conceived" from the early Creed forms is not to be taken as indicating doubt in the early Church of the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. This was a doctrine fully and unequivocally received from the apostles onward. "Long before Christians found time to set up theories on the original development of individual personality from the species," says Dr. Zahn, "and also long before anyone had derived unhistorical consequences from the miracle of the conception of Jesus with reference to Mary and the brothers of Jesus, the fruit of her marriage with Joseph, belief in Jesus as the Son

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<sup>1</sup> See Kattenbusch, ii, p. 881.

of the Virgin was the universal Christian belief. Was there ever, indeed, a Christian community without this belief?"<sup>1</sup>

The expression "conceived by the Holy Ghost" is ambiguous; the Holy Ghost did not conceive him, but said unto the Virgin, "Thou shalt conceive" (Luke 1. 31). By the operation of the Holy Ghost the Virgin was enabled to conceive, and for this reason Christ is said to have been conceived "by" him.

The virgin birth of Christ has long been a "stone of stumbling and rock of offense." Critics who reject the miraculous will reject it, but those who recognize Christianity as supernatural from beginning to end, and as coming to the world a direct revelation from God, will not stumble at the incarnation. As a revelation it must be received by faith, but in some of its aspects it has a foundation in history.

We cite one prophecy: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7. 14). Matthew quotes this and applies it to Christ. It is the opinion of Bible scholars that Matthew

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<sup>1</sup> Apostles' Creed, p. 123.

wrote his Gospel specifically for the Jews, and sought to show in the birth, life, and death of Christ a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1. 22, 23). Matthew quoted the passages which the learned rabbis always applied to the Messiah, while many of the people who had seen and heard Jesus were still living, and while the facts he cited could not be successfully contradicted. This he could not have done if his narration had been full of fable or fiction.

The account given by Saint Luke is more specific in detail. He was a contemporary and friend of those who were actual eyewitnesses of Christ's life, and exact evidence was accessible to him. His credibility as a historian was tested in the matter of the taxation under Quirinius,<sup>1</sup> which though long disputed is now admitted to be fact.

Saint Luke's account of the virgin birth

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. R. J. Cooke, *The Incarnation and Recent Criticism*, p. 76.

had not been communicated to him as a secret unknown to the body of believers. Many had set forth in order a declaration of these things, which were most surely believed among them—things held on the surest evidence as absolute facts, by the full faith of the Church. He also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, would write them for his most excellent friend Theophilus, arranging them in proper order and commencing at the very beginning of the history, which no other historian had done. Dr. Sanday considers the substance of the first two chapters of Saint Luke's Gospel, "in all essential characteristics older than anything else in the New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

"The two former Gospels," says Van Oosterzee, "show us who Jesus was; this informs us how he became what he was, pointing us successively to the unborn (2. 5), the infant (2. 6), the child (2. 27), the boy (2. 40), and the man (3. 22)."

#### BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

The phrase "from the beginning" given by Saint Luke is not limited to the public minis-

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Orr, p. 241.



try of Christ, but goes back to the families of Zacharias and Joseph. Luke meant to bring to view the very beginning of the new epoch that had dawned upon the world, and to do it accurately and in order. The eyewitnesses to some of the events narrated could be none other than Mary herself and other members of the families interested. It is certain that Mary's kinswoman, Elisabeth, had knowledge of some facts regarding the conception and prospective birth of Mary's Child. After the annunciation by the angel, Mary paid a visit to Elisabeth, who was soon to give birth to the child destined to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Elisabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, said: "Blessed art thou among women. . . . And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" These holy women, drawn together by ties of relationship, religious hope, and similar conditions, would converse in sacred confidence, and, by fair inference, what Mary knew was also known to Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Luke says: "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, . . . unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, . . . to be taxed, with Mary his espoused wife. . . .

And she brought forth her firstborn son" (Luke 2. 4-7).

Some writers think it possible, and even probable, that Luke obtained the facts from Mary, but if he did not, his language indicates that the source of his information was perfectly reliable. The prologue to his Gospel indicates some written documents, and, we may well suppose, some record made of the singular events which had occurred in the two families named.

Mary kept in touch with Jesus during his whole ministry, probably without understanding the full nature and extent of his mission. She had in some degree to learn as others did the significance of his life by his public teaching and his miracles. It does not appear that Jesus fully revealed himself to his relatives any more than to his other disciples. His first miracle was at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, "and the mother of Jesus was there." Mary was also present at the crucifixion. Once more she comes to notice as a member of the infant Church of Jerusalem. It was a critical time for the Church and the disciples were drawn together by a common interest. Christ had risen and ascended; the disciples had re-

turned from Mount Olivet, the scene of the ascension, and were gathered in the "upper room," their place of assembly. "All continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1. 14). They were waiting the enduement of power and they all shared the Pentecostal baptism of fire.

It is a fact of great importance and of Christian congratulation that Mary lived to see this stage of development in the work of which her Son was the source and center. If she had not known the full import of the things which for many years she kept and "pondered in her heart," she knew them now. Jesus was more than Son—he was her Redeemer and God. He had been subject to her; she was now subject to him. The salutation of the angel Gabriel, the birth song of the angels, the words of the wise men, and of Simeon and Anna, all were now understood.

There is conclusive evidence that Mary was in close association with the apostles after the resurrection. She was a member of the household of Saint John, first in Jerusalem, and possibly in Ephesus, until she died.

After the resurrection of Christ and the baptism at Pentecost, Christianity became intensely aggressive; it spread rapidly. It was no longer a Jewish sect; it assumed the aspect, and made the claim, of a world-religion. The apostles had entered the field for life; for them everything was at stake. The parentage, birth, boyhood, and public ministry of Christ must have been matters of deep interest to all his adherents, and the apostles were men of clear insight. The instance of Thomas, who refused the testimony of others as to the resurrection, indicates care in the reception of evidence. After Pentecost the Church accepted the divinity of Christ, the spiritual nature and world-wide extent of his kingdom. Would its leaders not then investigate all the circumstances of his advent and career? Of whom could they obtain testimony of his birth? Of the singular and miraculous facts preceding it no one but the virgin mother could give testimony. Could she then have been averse to giving it? Not after Pentecost, when his relation to the Deity was proven and accepted. Such information was desired, was important, and as Mary was in close association with those who had a right to know, the conclusion

is inevitable that she gave it. She may not have given it to Luke, but to some one of the inner circle of her acquaintances who committed it to writing, and this writing may have been one of the many documents alluded to by Luke in the prologue to his Gospel. This conclusion is in no sense exclusive of the fact of inspiration. The Spirit of God ruled, taking into his service the human for the attainment of his purpose.

It will be noticed that no account of the virgin birth is given by Saint Mark or Saint John. The Gospel by Saint Mark opens with a specific title—"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." It is not the beginning of his human life, but the beginning of his gospel, his public ministry. Mark at once identifies John the Baptist and Jesus with the ancient prophecies (Isa. 40. 3; Mal. 3. 1). John is the "messenger," "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," who is to prepare the way for One greater than himself. "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mark 1. 8). Then Jesus is introduced, and the testimony to his Sonship is completed by a voice from God himself, "And there came a voice

from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1. 11).

Saint John also omits the virgin birth and all the precedent facts, but in thought he goes back beyond all the events of time, and in an outburst of revelation, tells of the preëxistence of Him whose Gospel he was about to write. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1. 1). "Before all things else *was the Word—not was created, or brought into existence, but was.* Fix any assignable point as the *beginning*, and the Word *was*, and still *was*. That is, the Word is absolutely eternal."<sup>1</sup>

The omission of the virgin birth by Saint John cannot be regarded as an argument against it. No man could believe that Jesus Christ was born as other men are by natural generation, and write of him as John wrote at the beginning of his Gospel. He omits the fact of birth, but definitely states the incarnation. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14).

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<sup>1</sup> Whedon, in loco.

It has been observed that the virgin birth is not mentioned in any of the Epistles. This is not surprising, as the Epistles were not designed to give a chronological account of Jesus. Nothing is said of his life, no mention is made of his miracles. The Epistles were written in answer to questions propounded by inquirers, or to correct misconceptions of Christian doctrine. The absence of mention does not indicate that the virgin birth was not known, but, rather, that it was a fundamental fact of the life of Christ, which no one doubted.

The interval between the Epistles and the Gospels must have been brief, and full of verbal testimony regarding all important questions that related to Christ. The apostolic fathers were contemporary with the apostles and they left undoubted testimony of the virgin birth. Ignatius wrote, "For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary; of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

The objection to the dogma is that it involves the supernatural. But in the Christian's religious life there is never a step without faith in the supernatural. "The Christ

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<sup>1</sup> Epistle to Ephesians, chap. xviii.

of faith is from his birth divine and holy. Natural birth never produces anything holy and divine, but human and sinful; consequently, the origin of Jesus must have been miraculous.”<sup>1</sup>

The wisdom or power of God in relation to the redemption of mankind cannot be limited; whether other methods than those adopted were possible or not cannot be known, nor is it within the province of man to inquire; but the New Testament story of the incarnation commends itself to human reason. “Who will not feel the force of the position that, granted God was to be incarnate, the story of Christ’s incarnation is the noblest and most probable? He is not born of a man’s lust nor of a woman’s desire, but of the submission of untainted womanhood to the direct creative power of God.”<sup>2</sup>

No one can doubt the absolute holiness of Jesus as he is presented to us in the Gospels. No flaw can be found in his character. Pure and unerring in judgment, never manifesting consciousness of sin while tracing sin in man back to its first conception in thought before

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<sup>1</sup> Cruzmacher, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop D. A. Goodsell, *The Things that Remain*, p. 31.



it comes to overt act. He confesses no sin, challenges his enemies to convince him of sin, seeks no forgiveness, needs no regeneration. This is the testimony of evangelists and apostles. This sinlessness can be accounted for only by the miraculous interposition of God. "A sinless man," says Professor A. B. Bruce, "is as much a miracle in the moral world as a virgin birth is a miracle in the physical world."

As the work of redemption is unique in the universe, so also is the method of its accomplishment. The experience of the redemption in our personal salvation we may attain unto; the mystery and mode of the incarnation we may well leave with the infinite wisdom of God. Reason may persuade us that it is credible, history may attest some of its circumstances, but faith alone can accept the doctrine as that upon which the salvation of the world depends.

## ARTICLE IV

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED

### SUFFERED

AT the age of thirty years Jesus entered upon his public ministry; then his severe conflict and suffering began. The teaching and miracles of Christ are not mentioned in the Creed. The wide interval between his birth and death is passed without one word. His miraculous birth, which includes his divine and sinless nature, is placed in juxtaposition to the fact that he *suffered*, as though the purity of his nature intensified his suffering.

The word "suffered" is not intended to cover the whole life of Christ, but must be limited to what he suffered under Pontius Pilate. The words "suffered" and "dead" were added to the older form of the Creed in the fourth century. The writings of the prophets show very clearly that the Messiah was to lead a suffering life and die an ignominious death. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is filled with predictions that were so exactly fulfilled by Jesus

Christ as to convince any reasonable mind that no other than he could have been intended by the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself said, "It is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought" (Mark 9. 12). After his resurrection Jesus declared to the disciples the necessity of his sufferings, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24. 25, 26). So Saint Paul taught that "Christ must needs have suffered" (Acts 17. 3).

In Gethsemane and on Calvary there lay upon him the weight of a world's guilt, which must be borne without help from God or man. There was an intensity of anguish, an awful mystery of suffering unknown to angels or men. In apostolic times, and later, some denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. They denied the reality of his body, affirming it to have been a phantom. They did not believe that he truly suffered. But those who scourged and crowned him with thorns, and crucified him, had abundant evidence of the substantial nature of his body and the reality of his suffering.

No view of the sufferings of Christ is in any sense adequate that does not regard them as endured by the incarnate Son of God. So long as there is an unrevealed mystery in the incarnation, so long will there be mystery as to the nature and extent of the sufferings of the Son of man. "With the doctrine of a union of the divine and human natures in a unity of personality in Christ, and that in the incarnation he was truly the *God-man*, we know not either the theology or philosophy which may limit his sufferings to a mere human consciousness. . . . The divine Son incarnate, and so incarnate in human nature as to unite it with himself in personal unity, could suffer; and did suffer in the redemption of the world."<sup>1</sup>

His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." He cried with a loud voice: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani! My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These words are expressive of the divine abandonment; of the departure of the Divine Presence as part of his atonement endurance. They were uttered to show

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<sup>1</sup> Miley on Atonement, p. 278.

that he was enduring an intolerable agony, deeper than any external infliction. This was the penalty of human sin—not the death of the body merely, but that severance of the spirit from God, the uttermost terrors of which no mortal has ever known.<sup>1</sup>

The Son of man was also the Son of God. He was not simply in touch with God, he was in nature and essence God. This divine Personality took human nature, and entered into its conditions, and that nature suffered and died, and the dead Christ is inseparable from the Son of God. Held by human limitations, we cannot understand it, and to make the attempt is to darken counsel by words without knowledge. That we cannot comprehend a fact is no argument against it. We accept the revelation with gratitude and stand amazed at the condescension of God and the honor conferred on man.

#### UNDER PONTIUS PILATE

This clause is found in all forms of the Creed. He was the Procurator of Judæa under whose administration, and by whose authority, Jesus Christ was crucified. It was

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<sup>1</sup> See Pope's Theology, vol. ii, p. 159.

better that Jesus should be judicially condemned and crucified, though unjustly, than to be murdered by an ungovernable and irresponsible mob. By the mention of Pontius Pilate the time of the crucifixion can be determined. It was customary in those times to make computations, and refer historical events of the times to the governor under whose authority they occurred.

The evangelists name Pontius Pilate as the governor who delivered Jesus to the Jews to be crucified. All the evangelists bear the same testimony in nearly the same words. Paul also connects Pilate with Christ, saying, Christ "before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6. 13).

Pilate represented Rome. He had at his command the authority of the Roman empire. He could, and did, decide the case in full view of the law and evidence, but in him was the weakness of the selfish time-server. He had not the moral fiber to meet the consequences of a righteous decision. He sat on the judgment seat to administer Roman law, proverbial for its stern justice. He pronounced the prisoner not guilty—"I find no fault in him." Then, in violation of law, sanctioned the

scourge, the crown of thorns, the mockery of worship and honor, and "delivered him to be crucified."

Much may be learned of Pilate from the New Testament and some facts can be gathered from other sources. Tacitus, the Roman historian, writes as follows: "*Christus, Tiberio imperitante per procuatorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat.*" This statement is equivalent to that of the Apostles' Creed, with two exceptions: first, the particular form of *supplicium*, or punishment, namely, crucifixion, is not specifically mentioned; and, secondly, the additional particular is supplied that the thing happened while Tiberius was emperor."<sup>1</sup>

Josephus tells how Pilate lost favor at Rome. He sent his troops against the Samaritans when they were not in rebellion and killed many of them. When the tumult was appeased they sought Vitellius, president of Syria, and accused Pilate of the murder of those whom his troops had killed. He was ordered to Rome to answer before the emperor the accusations of the Samaritans. He was not successful in defending himself, and, ac-

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Goodwin, *Foundations of the Creed*, p. 143.

according to tradition, was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where a monument is still shown as Pilate's tomb. According to tradition, the man who betrayed his Master with a kiss, and the man who condemned and delivered him to be scourged and crucified after he had declared him innocent, both came to their end by suicide, indicating remorse of conscience and the divine abhorrence of their evil deeds.

It may be asked why the name Pontius Pilate should appear in the Creed. Rufinus says, "They who have handed down the Creed to us have with much forethought specified the time when these things were done—'under Pontius Pilate'—lest in any respect the tradition should falter, as though vague and uncertain."<sup>1</sup> This is the only point of time mentioned in the Creed, and it serves as a most important link that connects the great event of the Saviour's crucifixion with concurrent events in secular history. It must not be thought for a moment that the name was inserted to hold Pilate up to the execration of all succeeding generations. The act and the actor will be forever condemned, but the Saviour's compassionate nature is seen in his

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Creed, section xviii.



lenient judgment of Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19. 11). This was Judas, who betrayed him, and the Jews who clamored for his blood.

#### WAS CRUCIFIED

It is an impressive fact that the prophecies concerning the Messiah should so distinctly point out the manner of his death so long before his coming. The cross is not mentioned, but other facts connected with the crucifixion are distinctly named. The twenty-second psalm has many statements that were verified in the crucifixion. Some of them did not apply to David, but did exactly apply to Christ. "They pierced my hands and my feet." This never occurred to David, but it did occur to Christ. Another striking prophecy is this, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." This did not occur to David, but a thousand years later Saint John told what he himself had seen. "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now

the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots" (John 19. 23, 24).

The Roman soldiers knew nothing of the prophetic Scriptures; the garments of the executed man by custom belonged to the executioners, and they were bent on securing and preserving them in the best form. They acted with the utmost freedom themselves, and yet fulfilled to the letter what the Spirit of God had foretold by David. It is also written in Zech. 12. 10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." John says, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19. 34). This is the testimony of an eyewitness: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. . . . And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19. 35-37). The expression above quoted from Zechariah is very striking. "They shall look

upon *ME* whom they have pierced"; God speaks this of himself. It implies that in the piercing of Christ, God himself, figuratively speaking, was pierced through the wounds of his beloved Son, and his cause was, and is, the cause of God. John carries it forward to the second Advent, "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Rev. 1. 7). John recognized the piercing of Jehovah in Zechariah as finding its fulfillment in the piercing of Jehovah-Jesus.

Jesus was accused of blasphemy and for this was condemned by the Sanhedrin. "Ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death" (Matt. 26. 65, 66). The Jews had no power to pass and execute sentence of death. Pilate would not recognize blasphemy as a crime against Roman law; they then charged Christ with sedition, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Luke 23. 2). When Pilate sought to release him they said, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar" (John 19. 12).

Crucifixion was considered the most horrible form of death, worse even than burning. To a Jew it acquired a factitious horror from the curse pronounced in the Jewish law, "He that is hanged [upon a tree] is accursed of God" (Deut. 21. 23).

The suffering was so severe, and death so slow in coming (sometimes two or three days), that officers intrusted with the execution of it, when mercifully inclined, would cause death to come in some less horrible way, and then would crucify the dead body. While this would obviate the severe suffering, the shame was still the same. The legs of the crucified were sometimes broken to hasten death. This was done to the two thieves crucified with Christ, but as Christ was already dead his legs were not broken, but the soldier thrust his spear into his side. Thus in two particulars were the Scriptures fulfilled (John 19. 33). Jesus Christ "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12. 2). No pain was severe enough, no ignominy deep enough to deter Christ from accomplishing the redemption of mankind. Once, when he contemplated the agony that lay before him, nature seemed to

quail, and he exclaimed: "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12. 27). His sensitive nature would have cried for exemption; his higher spirit realized the greatness and the necessity of his mission, and he persisted in the path of suffering and glory. He became human that he might suffer and die; he was divine that he might redeem. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2. 10).

The crucifixion marked the extreme point of humiliation and yet was the chief means of success and triumph. Strange as it may seem, a suffering and dying Christ is the glory of the Christian system. The motto of its most laborious and successful apostle was "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6. 14). The most solemn service instituted by Christ for the edification of his Church, to bind in holy fellowship his followers, was one that commemorated his death; not his birth, resurrection, or ascension, but his broken body and his

shed blood, and as often as we observe this we "proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11. 26, R. V.).

#### DEAD

Many things connected with the crucifixion tend to prove the actual death of Christ. He was crucified in Jerusalem, the capital of the country, at the time of the passover, when the city was full of people. It was not done "in a corner" or in any private way or place, but on Mount Calvary, which, though not a hill, was a place of public executions. He hung upon the cross, elevated to the public gaze. Jew and Gentile, Jewish priest and Roman soldier, friend and foe were eyewitnesses of his death. Both Jews and Romans were interested in making sure of his death. The representatives of the Sanhedrin were there, and would not miss the opportunity to see him die; they persistently sought his life and secured his condemnation by false accusations. The record says: "They crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him

save himself, if he is Christ, the chosen of God" (Luke 23. 33, 35). The soldiers "sitting down they watched him there." The centurion in charge of the execution would complete his work. Pilate would be sure of the death of the man he condemned. When Joseph desired the body of Jesus for burial "Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph" (Mark 15. 44, 45). His death was a fact about which they could not be deceived.

The real death of Christ was regarded as a most important fact by the primitive Church fathers. One of the dangerous heresies of that time was that Christ's body was not real but a mere phantom: if this were so, then he did not die; and if he did not die, he did not rise from the dead, and so the whole system of Christianity would be overthrown. Tertullian against Marcion wrote: "For he suffered nothing who did not truly suffer; and a phantom could not truly suffer. God's entire work, therefore, is subverted. Christ's death, wherein lies the whole weight and fruit of the

Christian name, is denied, although two apostles assert it so expressly as undoubtedly real, making it the very foundation of the gospel of our salvation, and of his own preaching. 'I have delivered unto you before all things,' says he, 'how that Christ died for our sins, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.' Besides, if his flesh is denied, how is his death to be asserted; for death is the proper suffering of the flesh, which returns through death back to the earth out of which it was taken, according to the law of its Maker? Now, if his death be denied, because of the denial of his flesh, there will be no certainty of his resurrection. For he rose not, for the very same reason that he died not, even because he possessed not the reality of the flesh, to which as death accrues, so does resurrection likewise."<sup>1</sup>

#### AND BURIED

The burial of Christ is specifically mentioned. When the evening of the day on which he died had come, "A rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple, . . . went to Pilate, and begged

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<sup>1</sup> Book III, chap. viii.



the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed" (Matt. 27. 57-59). All the evangelists give substantially the same account. It is a pleasing thought that after the horrible scene of the trial, condemnation, and execution, the sacred body of Jesus should be tenderly cared for by those who loved him. Joseph and Nicodemus, while Christ was living, were timid disciples; had they been more courageous, they might have done more for him; but by the tender affection shown in the case of his dead body they won a place in the hearts of Christian people of every generation to the end of time.

It was important that the burial should be named in the Creed. His body was holy; it had never been the instrument of sin. In its origin it was a special creation of the Holy Ghost, and the subject of prophecy in its end. "A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19. 36; see also Psa. 34. 20). "My flesh also shall rest in hope: . . . neither wilt thou

suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16. 10; see also Acts 2. 26).

A sacred providence watched over the body of our Lord, so that his resurrection could be proved by positive testimony. His tomb was not far from the place of death; he was buried by his friends, but his tomb was under surveillance of his enemies; they knew he was dead and buried. These are historical facts that cannot be reasonably doubted. The rock-hewn tomb, the stone, the official seal, and the soldier sentinels contribute to our knowledge that as the death and burial were real, so also was the resurrection.

## ARTICLE V

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL; THE THIRD DAY HE  
ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

HE DESCENDED INTO HELL<sup>1</sup>

THIS clause of the article first appeared in the Aquileian Creed about the year A. D. 390. Rufinus said: "It should be known that this clause is not added in the Creed of the Roman Church, neither is it in that of the Oriental churches. It seems to be implied, however, when it is said that 'He was buried.'"<sup>2</sup> From this comment we infer that he had no knowledge of its source. Before his time, as early as 359 and 360, the doctrine of descent had been put forth by the Arian Assemblies at Simium, Nice, and Constantinople. Dr. Swete is inclined to assign the clause to the end of the second century or the beginning of the third.<sup>3</sup> In the latter part of the sixth century it is found in the Creed of Cæsarius, arch-

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<sup>1</sup> The clause of the article here considered is omitted from the Creed as found in the order of worship in Episcopal Methodism. The General Conference of 1786 omitted it to make the Creed comport with the Articles of Religion, from which it was omitted by Wesley.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary on the Creed, section xvii.

<sup>3</sup> The Apostles' Creed, pp. 61, 62.

bishop of Arles, and in that of Venantius Fortunatus, bishop of Portiers. From these it came into the present text.

It is believed by many writers that it was inserted as a correction of heretical opinions. King attributes the error to the Arians, Eunomians, and especially to the Apollinarians.<sup>1</sup> These errorists violently assailed the truth of our Saviour's humanity. Apollinaris taught that Christ took a human body and a sensitive animal soul, but that the place of the rational soul was supplied by God, the Word, and that the divine in Christ performed the functions of reason and supplied the place of mind, the spiritual and intellectual principle in man.

"It is at least probable," says Dr. Swete, "that the words '*descendit ad inferna*' were introduced to meet some heresy; and the Docetic tendency of the latter part of the second century suggests itself as likely to have supplied the occasion."<sup>2</sup>

The orthodox view was guarded by this article. If Christ was not only buried, but descended into Hades, he must have had a hu-

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<sup>1</sup> Critical History, Apostles' Creed, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> The Apostles' Creed, p. 61.

man spirit as well as a human body, which Apollinaris denied.

In the writings of the early church fathers, some allusion is made to the descent without connecting it with any portion of God's Word.

Harnack writes: "As soon as the clause appears in the Creed—that is, from the second half of the fourth century onward—it is explained with the rest by the commentators. But the explanations vary a good deal. As far as I know, scarcely anyone in antiquity thought of 'hell' in this connection, but of the underworld—Hades—the domain of the dead."<sup>1</sup>

The descent of the Saviour into Hades is supposed to be alluded to in the following Scriptures: Acts 2. 31; 1 Pet. 3. 19; 4. 6; Rom. 10. 7; Eph. 4. 9. Allusions to it are found in the writers of the first and second centuries. Justin Martyr accuses the Jews of cutting from the sayings of Jeremiah the following passage: "The Lord God remembered his dead people of Israel who lay in the grave; and he descended to preach to them his own salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Tertullian writes, "Now although Christ is

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<sup>1</sup> The Apostles' Creed, Nineteenth Century Magazine, July, 1893, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Dial., chap. lxxii. The passage is not to be found in any ancient version or Jewish Targum and is regarded as spurious.

God, yet, being also man, 'He died according to the Scriptures,' and 'according to the same Scriptures was buried.' With the same law of his being he fully complied, by remaining in Hades in the form and condition of a dead man; nor did he ascend to the heights of heaven before descending into the lower parts of the earth, that he might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of himself."<sup>1</sup>

The thought and phraseology became so common it is not surprising that it found its way into the baptismal formula, not as a new doctrine but as a confirmation of an old and accepted one.

The purpose of the descent is variously stated by the early writers. It was thought that he went down to shed a glorious light in the dark recesses of Hades, to open its doors and lead forth its prisoners, to preach the gospel to the dead, to free his followers from the power of death, to share the common lot of man. The idea that Christ visited Hades to suffer the torments of the lost in order to complete thereby his redemptive work arose in the Middle Ages.

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<sup>1</sup> On the Soul, chap. iv.

In modern times it is accepted by some churches and rejected by others. It is not found in the Nicene Creed, and is not accepted by the Greek Church, but it is accepted by the Roman and Anglican Churches. It is emphasized by being made a part of the general confession of the English Church and is number three of its Thirty-nine Articles, reading as follows: "As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed that he went down into hell." This article, as it appeared in 1553, included an explanation of the purpose of the descent, but such violent controversy arose regarding it that at the revision in the reign of Elizabeth that portion was stricken out, leaving the article in its present form. It is regarded as "an Article of Religion, not of Faith." "The Rubric of the Prayer Book [Protestant Episcopal] provides that any church may use the words 'He went into the place of departed spirits,' which are considered as words of the same meaning in the Creed." Bishop Pearson states that "the first intention of putting these words in the Creed was only to express the burial or the descent of the Saviour's body into the grave. He argues, however, that since it was put into

the Roman Creed, 'it cannot be imagined that as it now stands it should signify only the burial of Christ.'"<sup>1</sup>

Hell may be taken to mean the place to which all souls, whether good or bad, are carried after death. The Greek word was used by Greek writers in this sense. The following is a proper exposition of the article: The Saviour died, his body was committed to the tomb, and his soul went into Hades, the place of departed spirits. In this he followed, step by step, all human kind, through death, the grave, and the separate existence of the soul in the place to which God had assigned it. But, his work being now done, and his humiliation ended, his exaltation began. "His soul was not left in hell [Hades], neither his flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2. 31). While his body was buried in the earth, his spotless soul went into the habitation of holy and pious souls till the time of his resurrection.

A few passages of Scripture indicate a place where departed souls abide until the judgment. Jesus said in regard to the rich man and Lazarus, "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." In contrast to the place

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<sup>1</sup> On the Creed, p. 343.



and condition of the rich man, he speaks of "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16. 23). Hades is represented as a place of two distinct regions; and its inhabitants as souls in two distinct conditions, the righteous beyond the reach of pain and sorrow. In accord with this are the words of Jesus to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23. 43). "The primeval paradise was lost, and the name was transferred by the Jewish Church to the blessed section of Hades, or to the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. Beyond all doubt it was the intention of Jesus to designate *this* by the term *paradise* to the dying thief. The passage, therefore, presents an unanswerable proof of the existence both of a human soul separate from the body, and a state of happy consciousness of the justified soul immediately after death, and before the resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

To those who die in Christ it will be a place and condition of rest, purity, and happiness, and as purchased for us by Christ, and assigned to us by infinite wisdom, it must be the best place in all the universe of God in which

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<sup>1</sup> Whedon, in loco.

to await the resurrection and the consummation of the glory of the redeemed.

#### THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD<sup>1</sup>

This clause of the article is found in all forms of the Creed, while other articles have been changed at different times. This fact indicates the importance of the doctrine of our Lord's resurrection, and the emphasis laid upon it in every successive century. This was the one great truth the apostles were commissioned to make known to the world. The preaching of Saint Paul at Athens is summed up in the words, "He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection," as though this contained his whole gospel. In the choice of an apostle to take the place of Judas, Peter said, "Of the men therefore that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, . . . must one become a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1. 21, 22, R. V.), as though that were the most important part of the apostolic office.

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<sup>1</sup> Rose again. The word "again" is deemed ambiguous by some because it seems to imply a second resurrection. The phrase is scriptural; see Matt. 26. 32; 1 Cor. 15. 4; 2 Cor. 5. 15; 1 Thess. 4. 14. The Saviour was stricken down by death; he rose again to life. It is used in all English versions of the three great Creeds; it is not misleading, has become sacred from long usage, and should be retained.

The apostles were not expecting the resurrection of their Lord, though he had told them it must occur. Either they did not understand his word or else their faith was too weak to grasp the possibility of the stupendous miracle involved. Their hopes had died. They said, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24. 21). When the miracle appeared it was a surprise to them, and they received the first report as "idle tales." The resurrection of Christ was the second movement in the spread and establishment of the Christian religion.

If there had been no resurrection, there would have been no Christian system. It was the basis of apostolic preaching. Paul placed it as the keystone of the Christian arch, so that on it rests the whole system of Christian truth: "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15. 16, 17). "The dogma of the resurrection is the proof of all other dogmas, the foundation of the Christian life and hope, the soul of the entire apostolic preaching, the corner stone on which the Christian Church is built."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christleib, *Modern Doubt*, p. 448.

There is no Christian doctrine more important than that of the resurrection of Christ, and none more essential to personal Christian belief, for a denial of the resurrection of the human body of Jesus involves nothing less than an absolute rejection of Christianity; but an unswerving acceptance of it will be readily followed by an acceptance of every other supernatural event relating to Christ, if attended by proper evidence. The miraculous birth, sinlessness, and ascension will not be denied on the ground of their supernatural character.

Divine revelation shows that the way devised by God was a supernatural way. A supernatural birth, both divine and human, which we cannot understand; a life of perfect sinless obedience which is beyond the power of human kind; a passion and death of world-redeeming power; a resurrection by which death was overcome by One who had "life in himself," and had "power to lay it down and power to take it again"; an ascension and enthronement at the right hand of God, followed by the mission of the Holy Spirit—this was God's way, wonderful in wisdom, gracious in design, powerful in execution, and all suffi-

cient in efficacy; all that heaven could give and all that man could want. These are connected parts of one great whole. The resurrection of Christ was indispensable to connect his work on earth with his work in heaven, and is a firm foundation for our hope of immortality and life.

The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ has a firm historical basis, and does not rest upon faith alone. Supernatural and transcendental in character, it is, nevertheless, one of the best authenticated facts in Christian history, and there is no antecedent presumption that can make it incredible. It unites and binds in one the physical and spiritual realms, the present and the future life. In it we see authenticated history and Christian faith blended more perfectly than in any other event connected with Christ and his redemptive work.

## ARTICLE VI

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITTETH ON  
THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE  
FATHER ALMIGHTY

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN

THIS article is accepted by all branches of the Church of Christ. Professor Harnack asserts that the special prominence given to the ascension in the Apostles' Creed is a "deviation from the oldest teaching," for "in the primitive tradition the ascension had no separate place; that it is not mentioned in the first three Gospels."

It has been observed by many writers that the ascension does not lie within the scope of the Gospels, but more properly belongs as an introduction to the Acts of the Apostles; a preparation for Pentecost and the beginning of the history of the Church.

Professor Harnack excludes the last two verses of Saint Mark's Gospel, and the fiftieth and fifty-first verses of the Gospel by Saint Luke. Without these there is good evidence of the faith of the early Church in the ascen-

sion of Christ as a distinct fact, not merely implied in his resurrection, but that the resurrection body of Christ was seen to ascend up into heaven.

The ascension is distinctly alluded to by Saint Paul in Eph. 4. 8-10: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things)"; and also 1 Tim. 3. 16, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

It is specifically named in the sub-apostolic fathers. Ignatius says, "Do ye therefore all run together as into one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and is with and is gone to one."<sup>1</sup> Polycarp quotes frequently from 1 Peter, and could not have been ignorant of the direct allusion which he makes to the ascension in chapter 3, verses 21, 22, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone

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<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Mag., chap. vii.

into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." Barnabas says: "Therefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also in which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when he had manifested himself, he ascended into the heavens."<sup>1</sup> Irenæus speaks of the unity of the faith of the Church in "the ascension into heaven, in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord."<sup>2</sup> None of the ancient writers intimates that the ascension was less historic than the resurrection.

The appearances of Christ to his disciples after his resurrection could not be continued indefinitely; there must be a close, and it must be such a close as would impress mankind with his power, and the imperishable nature of his resurrection body. To "ascend up where he was before" was a fitting climax to his wonderful life, tragic death, and miraculous resurrection. The presence of Christ in heaven is assumed by the inspired writers who do not specifically mention the ascension.

Saint Matthew says, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Epistle, chap. xv. If this epistle is not genuine, it is of an early date.

<sup>2</sup> Against Heresies, Book I, chap. x.



throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. 25. 31). The presence of Christ with God is assumed by Saint John, "He was come from God, and went to God" (John 13. 3). And Jesus himself so asserted, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16. 28).

Saint Paul said, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4. 16).

All these passages imply the bodily ascension of Christ. Saint Luke gives a brief account of the last interview of Christ with his disciples. He gave commandments concerning the establishment of his kingdom. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1. 9).

His earthly career was ended, his suffering past, and his triumph begun. He would now resume the glory which he had with his Father "before the world was"; he would return to receive the throne and crown. To his disciples all doubt was dissipated; faith was lost in

sight, and hope in fruition; a blessed oneness of faith, hope, and holy purpose dwelt in their hearts, and bound them together. His last words were words of instruction and blessing; they stood on the verge of heaven. He was parted from them, not suddenly, as when he "vanished out of their sight," but slowly "he was taken up." The attractive force of heaven was greater than that of earth, and he ascended. No angel convoy bore him upward, but his glorified body, in accord with its new, mysterious nature, arose unaided, "and a cloud received him out of their sight." Their eyes could not follow him beyond the cloud—he passed into the heavens. A little later Stephen saw him "standing on the right hand of God."

Christ ascended that he might receive and bestow gifts upon men (Psa. 68. 18); that he might open a new way to his kingdom and glory (Heb. 10. 20); that he might prepare a place for his followers (John 14. 3); that he might ever live to be a faithful High Priest to make intercession for his people. And thus he entered upon the completeness of spiritual being without lessening in any degree the completeness of his humanity. The Mediator

between God and man is still "himself man" (1 Tim. 2. 5). This Man Christ Jesus is in heaven.

AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE  
FATHER ALMIGHTY

The thought of Christ's exaltation is presented in language adapted to man's nature and intelligence. In the Holy Scriptures where human parts are ascribed to God—where face, eyes, hands of God are referred to—the language is accommodated to the understanding of man. We can form no just conception of the agency of a pure spiritual substance, and therefore in speaking of God we are under the necessity of using terms derived from ourselves, and which we cannot but know are inapplicable to him. So the words "sitteth at the right hand of God" are a declaration of the advancement of Christ our Lord to his regal office and of his exercise of kingly power. This advancement was made by the mighty power of God "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,

and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1. 20-22).

This is wonderful exaltation and glory for Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man. There is in it also much consolation and glory for believers. The elevation of our own nature to such dignity and honor would not be credible if it were not specifically declared in the Word of God. Man, in the person of our glorious Redeemer, is exalted above the blessed spirits and angels of heaven, and all supernal powers must do him homage. This reflects true dignity upon the nature of mankind. This makes heaven and earth agree; it makes the Church on earth and the Church in heaven one. All who can honestly recite this Creed, and say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord," in the sense of a true and saving faith, have a real interest in whatever Christ is, and in whatever glory and power he possesses. In that Christ is exalted, so are we in him.

## ARTICLE VII

### FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

THIS article can be traced back in an almost unaltered form to the earliest creeds known.

#### FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE

During all the ages from the ascension to the Judgment Day, Jesus Christ will administer the affairs of his kingdom on the mediatorial throne. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15. 25). He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28 18). He is the source of all power and authority; he exercises a rightful dominion, and is the world's arbiter. He controls and governs absolutely everything that pertains to human interests. How long will this reign continue? When will the end come? The mediatorial reign of Christ is a remedial system; it was provided for specific purposes and must therefore be limited. It will continue until its purposes are accom-

plished, and is not measured by the flight of time, but by the lapse of events.

Men have often attempted to designate the time when the Judgment Day will come; nothing is more presumptuous or futile; it is known only to the Triune God. Man must watch events. "When he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power," when "all enemies" are "under his feet," "then cometh the end" (1 Cor. 15. 24).

Jesus ascended to heaven; from thence he will return. "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3. 20, R. V.). The angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1. 11). The fact of his coming hangs on no contingencies; he is not subject to the laws or accidents of time or matter. No substitute, angelic or divine, will come in his stead. It will be "this same Jesus" who took upon him our nature and died for our sins.

The purpose of this article is not so much to declare the certainty of a general Judgment at the end of the world as to show who shall be the Judge. It is the concluding article of

belief in Jesus Christ. Jesus, now seated at the right hand of God, shall from that high place of honor and power come to judge mankind. The risen Lord commanded the apostles "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead" (Acts 10. 42).

There is no discrepancy in the statements of Scripture when judgment is ascribed to the Father and also to the Son. "God is the judge of all the earth." The Judgment is called "the day of God" (2 Pet. 3. 12); "that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16. 14). Such passages refer to the Triune God, the Judge as to original authority, power, and right of judgment; but according to the plan settled between the three Divine Persons, the work is assigned to the Son. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5. 22). The cross and the judgment throne bear the same Son of man.

The Judge will be glorious in his coming. His first advent was in the obscurity of an infant's birth; the second will be in such glory as can attend Deity only. "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto

the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24. 27). "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24. 30). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1. 7). "Every eye" carries the visible fact to every individual of the human family, and "shall see" declares the visibility of the Judge in all his majesty.

He will be glorious also in his attendants. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25. 31). The angels who were engaged with him in the administration of his mediatorial kingdom will be his attendants. Saints are said to judge the world, not as co-judges with Christ, but as approvers of his sentence.

Of the "throne of his glory" we can form no just conception, since the world furnishes no analogy. "His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire" (Dan. 7. 9).



The place of the judgment is uncertain; it may be indicated by Saint Paul, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 17). "The grand congregation of the Judgment may be in pure space; for these resurrection bodies, absolved from the power of gravitation and power of pure volition, can tread upon a plane of pure space as easily as Jesus trod upon the sea, or as we tread upon a pavement."<sup>1</sup>

#### THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

The judgment must be preceded by the resurrection. "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5. 28, 29, R. V.).

In both ancient and modern times the phrase "quick and the dead" has had various interpretations; that generally accepted is that by "the dead" are meant all who have died before the hour of Christ's coming to judg-

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<sup>1</sup> Whedon, *in loco*.

ment, and by "the quick" such as shall then be alive. This indicates that the race of mankind will not grow less or disappear before the coming of our Lord. We have reason to believe that teeming millions will be living, and engaged in various human activities. "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24. 38, 39). "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3. 10). It will be a sudden surprise to the skeptical scoffers who have said, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3. 4). Paul briefly describes the coming of our Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the change that will come to the living: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4. 16). "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15. 51, 52). This change will be equal to the resurrection, and those who are dead, and those who are living when the Judge shall come, shall all, in the same form, stand before the Judge.

What will be the nature and extent of the investigation of human conduct and character at the Judgment? Omniscience and omnipresence are attributes of God, and in regard to the thoughts, words, and actions of men God is not unobservant. How overwhelming is the thought that God, a divine Personality, is ever present with us, and consciously recognizes every act, word, and thought. These attributes are not to be confounded with the revelations of physical science, but one may be illustrated by the other. A recent writer observes: "According to the doctrine of mechanical reaction, it would appear that our words and actions are imprinted on the material universe forever; and not only so, but according to the doctrine of electric reaction, our very thoughts are telegraphed to every part of the universe, and remain there woven into its tex-

ture for all future time: and that it needs only the acuter perceptions of higher beings to see all those actions thus recorded there, and to read the thoughts of the heart of man.”<sup>1</sup>

We are not left in doubt as to what will be the subject-matter of the Judgment; it will include our thoughts, words, and actions. “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1 Cor. 4. 5).

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5. 10). This definitely limits the Judgment to the earthly life. If the human soul is capable of moral acts between death and the resurrection, those acts do not come within the scope of the Judgment.

The doctrine of a future Judgment rests primarily upon divine revelation, but it has some foundation in reason. There is a conscience in every human being, and, looking back upon actions done, it either approves or condemns them; and these actions will witness

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<sup>1</sup> Cloquet, on the Thirty-nine Articles, p. 55.

for commendation or condemnation. Men are a law unto themselves and "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another" (Rom. 2. 15).

The doctrine is entirely agreeable to reason, which fully concurs with revelation in directing our minds to a state of retribution. If we do not accept the truth of a Judgment to come, there is no alternative to the conclusion that the universe is without a moral government.

## ARTICLE VIII

### I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST

ON account of the numerous subdivisions of the Creed in regard to our faith in Jesus Christ, we repeat our declaration of faith and say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." It is seen by the Creed of Marcellus and by that of Rufinus that the early Christians did not repeat the words "I believe," but used the conjunction and the object and said, "And in the Holy Ghost."

The subject of this article is profound and its importance to the Christian Church beyond our comprehension. The six preceding articles treat of Jesus Christ, his life, death, and the supernatural events that center in him. The facts concerning Christ are recorded in the four Gospels—biographies written by his contemporaries, three of them by men who knew him personally, and heard the words of life as they fell from his lips. But this article deals with an unseen one, an entirely spiritual Personality. What do we mean when we say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost"? Can we tell

what spirit is? In Hebrew, Greek, and Latin the word used for spirit means wind or breath: "He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind" (Amos 4. 13); "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created" (Psa. 104. 30); "The Lord Jesus shall slay [the lawless one] with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2. 8, R. V.). Breath is the symbol of life. When breathing ceases the body dies. Thus the word was applied to the vital principle, the human spirit which resides in and animates the body. The Lord Jesus said, "God is a Spirit" (John 4. 24). In this God and incorporeal man agree: both are mind, personality, spirit. This, as a predicate, belongs to the divine nature irrespective of the distinction of persons in that nature. But its characteristic application is to the third Person in the Trinity, who is called the Holy Spirit because of his essential holiness, and because in the Christian plan it is his peculiar work to sanctify the people of God. He is denominated the Spirit by way of eminence as the immediate author of spiritual life in the hearts of Christians.

The Spirit in the world may be considered as the divine Omnipresence, and be classed among the doctrines of theology, but the in-

dwelling and operation of the Spirit in the heart of the believer is an essential doctrine of Christianity clearly taught in the Word of God. The one is the province of the Spirit in nature, the other in grace. In this aspect of his nature and work he is brought to our knowledge by divine revelation. In the Old Testament he is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, sometimes the Holy Spirit of Jehovah, as in Psalm 51. 11.

In the Old Testament history the Holy Spirit was revealed as coöperating in the creation of the world, as the source and giver of life, as resisting the evil inclinations of man, and as the source of supernatural knowledge and prophetic gifts. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1. 21). After the canon of the Old Testament was closed Jewish writers continued to attribute the enlightenment of the human mind to the Holy Spirit of God. In the Book of Wisdom we read: "What man is he that can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of the Lord is? . . . And thy counsel who hath known, except thou give wisdom, and send thy



Holy Spirit from above?"<sup>1</sup> The same writer taught that the Spirit of God restrained, convicted, and warned men, urging them to leave their wickedness and believe in God. "For thine incorruptible Spirit is in all things. Therefore chasteneth thou them by little and by little that offend, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance wherein they have offended, that leaving their wickedness they may believe on thee, O Lord."<sup>2</sup> These passages show that the idea of a Holy Spirit was quite familiar to the Jewish mind before Christian teaching existed.

But it is especially in the New Testament that we find a full revealment of the Spirit's office and work in the salvation of men. It was the ancient faith that looked upon the prophets as teachers inspired of God, and when Christ came the Jews knew that the Spirit that wrought among the people in the days of old was still at work.

Power to conceive and bring forth a Son was imparted to the Virgin by the Holy Spirit, and thus by a miraculous act called into existence that human nature in which Deity was

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<sup>1</sup> Apocrypha, Book of Wisdom, 9. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Apocrypha, Book of Wisdom, 12. 1, 2.

enshrined when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1. 14). Jesus was anointed with the Spirit at his baptism; a visible sign from heaven showed the Spirit descending on and abiding with him, whom he thenceforth filled and led. Jesus taught his disciples to pray for and expect the Holy Spirit as the greatest gift heaven could bestow upon them. This bestowment was the promise of the Father and of the Son. The same Spirit was with the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. The Spirit of God in the New Testament Church differs from that in the Old in degree and in some modes of his manifestation rather than in substance or kind.

In the time of the prophets a special promise was given of a greater outpouring of the Spirit than had ever been known. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2. 28). This promise was renewed by Christ, who said: "Wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized

with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. . . . But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1. 4, 5, 8). These promises were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2. 4). The Church of God through all the ages and dispensations is one, having the same precious faith, with the one atoning sacrifice as its object and end; so the anointing Spirit that illumined, guided, sustained, and comforted God's faithful people in the earlier dispensations is the same which we worship, and in which we rejoice in this day of the fullness of God's grace.

There is a difference in the aspects in which the three Persons of the Deity appear to us who are subjects of redeeming grace: the Divine Father whom no man hath seen or can see and the Lord Jesus who was made flesh and dwelt among men, but is now no longer seen, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Holy Spirit, whose temple is the sanctified heart, and of whose presence within us we may be blessedly conscious. The divine Father stands

in the great background of all existences, and the divine Son is on the mediatorial throne, our Mediator and Advocate; but the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is ever present with us, and in us, for our purity and peace. Faith in God and Christ stretches away into the unseen, resting upon the divine record of the gospel; faith in the Holy Ghost has for its basis the divine record, and his conscious presence in the heart. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8. 16, R. V.). He is, above all, the inner witness for all truth, and the pledge of the completion of our salvation.

It has ever been the faith of the Church that "the Holy Ghost is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God."

Whatever proves the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead proves the divinity of the Holy Ghost. And if the three Persons in unity are "of one substance, power, and eternity," then the third Person of the Trinity is of necessity of "one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God."

The Scriptures directly testify to his God-

head; the evangelists made God and the Spirit of God identical, and speak of the Spirit as God. The promises of Christ teach the personality of the Holy Ghost. In the fourteenth and two following chapters of Saint John's Gospel he designates the Holy Spirit by the personal pronouns "He" and "Him" no less than fifteen times, showing the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the new dispensation. "He has left no question on this subject unsolved: before he was glorified by the Spirit he glorified the Spirit himself, by establishing the first principles of his personality, divinity, and eternal relations in the Godhead."<sup>1</sup>

Since baptism is to be performed "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," they must all three be Persons; and, since no superiority or difference between them can be predicated, they must all be of one substance, power, and eternity. It is not possible that the Father be self-existent and eternal, and the Son, constituted Son by "an eternal generation," and the Holy Ghost, in whose name we are equally baptized, be a bare energy, or operation, a quality or power without personal existence.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope, *Theology*, vol. 1, p. 266.

Saint Paul closed his Second Epistle to the Corinthians with the benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (2 Cor. 13. 14.) None but persons can bestow grace and communion; and the apostle offers his prayer to each of the three without indicating any disparity between them. Matthew names them in the following order: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matt. 28. 19). The variation indicates equality of persons, it being indifferent in what order they are named.

The doctrine of the Holy Ghost as held by the catholic, or universal, Church of Christ is expressed in the great Creeds as follows: The Nicene Constantinopolitan (A. D. 325-381)—"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father (and the Son),<sup>1</sup> who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." The Athanasian—"There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father,

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<sup>1</sup> The words "and the Son" (Latin, *filiogue*) were not added until the fifth century.

of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal."

Before the formation of these Creeds the Holy Spirit was worshiped and his distinct work in the salvation of men was acknowledged by the apostolic fathers. The Creeds did not introduce new doctrine in regard to the Holy Spirit, but defined that which was already established on the basis of the Holy Scriptures.

Justin Martyr wrote, "The most true God the Father . . . and the Son . . . and the prophetic Spirit we worship and adore."<sup>1</sup>

The province and power of the Holy Spirit in man's salvation was clearly understood by them. Ignatius wrote, "But ye, being full of the Holy Spirit, do nothing according to the flesh, but all things according to the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> Clement of Rome wrote, "Thus a profound and abundant peace was given to you all, and ye had an insatiable desire for doing good while a full outpouring of the Holy Spirit was upon you all."<sup>3</sup> The reception and cleansing

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<sup>1</sup> First Apology, chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle to Ephesians, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> First Epistle to Corinthians, chap. ii.

power of the Spirit was mentioned by Irænaeus, "But we do now receive a certain portion of the Holy Spirit, tending toward perfection, and preparing us for incorruption."<sup>1</sup>

Perplexities of mind will always arise in relation to mysteries in the deep things of God. The Trinity of Persons in the Godhead is a doctrine of pure revelation, and as such we can receive it, and confidently say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." When this is reduced to its simplest form it means, We believe *that God abides with man, and lives in him.* In this we have a fulfillment of the promise of Christ, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14. 16).

Peter, James, and John had walked and talked with God in the Person of the Son; God would now be with them in the Person of the Holy Ghost. Are we less privileged than they? Does not the Holy Ghost dwell in us? Are not our bodies his temples? "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14. 23).

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<sup>1</sup> Against Heresies, chap. viii.



The believer is conscious of this indwelling Spirit, and by his power he is transformed into the likeness of Christ, who was the perfection of obedience, holiness, and love. Man by his own power could never effect this. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3. 5). The Holy Spirit has an important part in man's salvation, regenerating and sanctifying his soul and bearing witness to his adoption into the family of God. The names by which this transformation is designated show that it can be wrought only by a divine agency. It is called a "*quicken*ing" (Eph. 2. 1); a life from the dead, a *translation* from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is a new creation, a change from sin to holiness, from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light. This work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3. 5).

The Holy Spirit is the source of all enlightenment in regard to God and our relations to him. John says, "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1. 9, R. V.).

Our thought regarding the work of the Holy Spirit should not be confined to the Christian dispensation, or to the Jewish or Christian peoples. John directs us to a broader field of the Spirit's operations. God has not left himself without witness in every human soul. As it is from God that all men receive life, so from the same source is derived all the light that is in reason and conscience. Thus God has imparted to man a sense of right and wrong, and has shone in his heart with some of the brightness of the Divine Presence. Every generous impulse, every holy emotion, every pure aspiration is the work of the Spirit of God.

The special work of the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation began in the Pentecostal baptism. That was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy and promise, and also of the promise of Christ. The Holy Spirit was then given in such fullness and power as had never been known. That was the birth day of the Church of Christ, and under the new dispensation will be seen the supreme work of the Holy Spirit.

The effect produced upon the minds of the apostles indicates the power and purpose of

the baptism. Their conceptions of the mission of Christ were imperfect and inadequate; after the baptism they understood, and were fully equipped for the work assigned them.

What can be said of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in succeeding ages? His agency is permanent. "He shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever" (John 14. 16, R. V.). The "Spirit of truth," who is the "Lord and Giver of life," fulfills his office now as surely as he did on the day of Pentecost. Our faith in the Holy Ghost recognizes him as an ever-present living agent, manifesting himself in the perpetuated life of the Church and in the spiritual life of the individual believer.

The fruit of the Spirit in the human heart "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5. 22, R. V.). Nine virtues are linked together in this golden chain that binds the believer in holy fellowship to God and holy service to mankind.

## ARTICLE IX

### THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

#### THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

THIS article has not always appeared in the same form or in the same place in the formula. In the earliest Creed it is "Holy Church," and in some early Creeds it is the last article in the series. To "Holy Church" the Greeks added the word "catholic," and later this word was taken into the Roman Creed.

Both ancient and modern writers upon the Creed have given attention to the special emphasis to be laid upon the preposition "in," as used in the articles regarding the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and its omission in those regarding the Church, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection, and the life everlasting.

In early Christian times some who admitted the divinity of the Son denied that of the Holy Ghost, claiming that his divinity was not asserted in the Creed. Epiphanius wrote

against these, saying that, as controversies had not arisen in relation to the Holy Ghost, the Creed was not so specific in its statement of his divinity, but that it condemned their heresy in that there was sufficient said of the Holy Ghost to declare him to be God, in that we are directed not only simply to believe the Father and the Son, but "*in* the Father and *in* the Son, terminating our faith upon them; so also, we are obliged, in like manner, to believe *in* the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> Rufinus uses the same argument and says, "By this monosyllabic preposition, therefore, the Creator is distinguished from the creatures, and things divine are separated from things human."<sup>2</sup>

Professor Zahn points to the same distinction: "The Roman Creed lays stress on the difference of the relation by placing the preposition before the three Subjects of the Godhead as objects of faith, and by dropping it before the other articles of faith which follow. By this we are to understand that which we can also express to a certain extent in the translation: 'I believe in God, in Christ, in the Holy Ghost,' and 'I believe a Holy Church,

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<sup>1</sup> King, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Comment on the Creed, section xxxvi.

forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the flesh.' ”<sup>1</sup> The Church is not to be looked upon as the author and giver of salvation; faith in the Church is not the same as faith in the Triune God; she cannot stand to us in the place of God or of Christ. She is not the Creator but the custodian of the truth, the glorious gospel of the blessed God; her utterances, whether it be tradition or interpretation, must be brought to the standard of the written Word.

The word “church” means simply an assembly or congregation, and must have some other word joined to it to determine its nature; as the Church of God, the Church of Christ. In the New Testament the word denotes the one mystical body of which Christ is the Head, and in the unity of which all saints in heaven and earth are included. The word is used in the Scriptures to designate a Christian society in some particular place, as “the church in Ephesus.” It was sometimes used of a few believers who met in some private house. So we read of Priscilla and Aquila and “the church that is in their house” (Rom. 16. 5). The church fathers used it of any body of believers associated together and participating

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<sup>1</sup> The Articles of the Apostles' Creed, p. 176.

with their pastor in the institution and ordinances of Christ. In this sense they speak of the Church of Rome, the Church of Antioch and the Church of Alexandria. They used it frequently, also in the sense of the universal body of believers. The use of the word for the building in which Christian worship was held did not begin until the time of Origen, in the third century. The word is not used in the Scriptures in the singular number as representing all the churches in any one country, or those adhering to any one system of doctrine, or form of government, as the Church of Rome or the Church of England; neither was it used with much frequency by the early church fathers. Lord King says: "I find the word 'church' once used by Cyprian for a collection of many particular churches, who mentions in the singular number 'the church' of God in Africa and Numidia. Else I do not remember that ever I met with it in this sense, in any writings, either of this or the rest of the fathers."<sup>1</sup>

That Jesus intended to form a church in the sense of a visible society cannot be doubted. He gave his disciples instruction

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<sup>1</sup> Primitive Church, p. 4.

and training to this end, and specially endowed the apostles as an equipment for their work—giving them a special commission: “All power is given unto me. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28. 19, 20). Thus as a separate visible body they were to teach all the doctrines of Christ, and by the sacrament of baptism admit others to fellowship with them.

It is not to be understood that the thought of a society or church that should embrace the whole world and invite every human being to the enjoyment of its blessings was introduced by Christ. The prophecies of the Old Testament preclude that idea. These prophecies are so numerous and so clear the wonder is they did not take a deeper hold on the Hebrew mind. The prophecies foretold the wide extent of the kingdom of the Messiah, the conversion and admission of the Gentiles. This was not understood in its spiritual signification. The idea that the Hebrew Church was



to be a blessing to all people was of slow growth, but it did exist.

How is the visible Church to be defined? The definition adopted by a very large part of the Protestant Christian world is as follows: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."<sup>1</sup> In a strict sense the Church of Christ consists of all who are united to Christ by a living faith; from whom they derive spiritual life and fruitfulness. "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15. 5). These constitute a visible Church; but no earthly power can determine as to the vital union with Christ of each individual member; this must be left to him who alone seeth the heart.

In a larger sense the visible Church of Christ consists of all who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and who adhere to the doctrines of the New Testament. This includes the

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<sup>1</sup>Article XIX of the Church of England and XIII of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Christian churches of the various Creeds and confessions differing in minor details of faith and forms of government. All these confessions concede that there is one visible Church of Jesus Christ on earth; but no one of them attains to the purity and perfection of the ideal state to which they all aspire; neither can one be found that can claim to be the one true Church to the exclusion of all others.

The Church of Christ is a great moral and spiritual fact, essential to the existence and perpetuity of the work of God. By this instrumentality the forces of evil are antagonized, the gospel of Christ proclaimed, and the truth brought in contact with the hearts of men for their eternal salvation. The Church has been a development in its forms and agencies. The early disciples whom Jesus gathered about him formed the nucleus of the mighty hosts that in every age have constituted the visible Church. The apostles were appointed by our Lord; after these came the deacons and the ordination of elders in every church (Acts 6. 5; 14. 23). Saint Paul's concise statement covers the organization as it existed in apostolic times, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists;

and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4. 11).

Christ the great founder of the Church designed that by these agencies the Church should be perpetuated. They were given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ": for instruction in the things of God; for the ministration of the holy sacraments; for aggressive propaganda, and for the edifying and building up of the whole Christian society in its most holy faith.

In every age since the apostles there have been the same grades of ministerial service. As eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ, the apostles could have no successors, but as overseers and directors their places have been filled. Prophets who foretold future events were known in apostolic times (Acts 21. 10). If that prophetic gift is now withheld, every preacher of the present day who is "moved by the Holy Ghost" to the work of the Christian ministry is a New Testament prophet. Each age has had its evangelists—Christian teachers who were not fixed to any particular place, but traveled from city to city or from province to province to preach the gospel.

They were "publishers of glad tidings," pioneers in gospel work, winning converts to Christ and leaving them to the care of pastors and teachers. Our own age has seen some of the most successful evangelists that have ever blessed the Church. It has ever had pastors to feed the flock of God with intellectual and spiritual food, to guide them in the pathway of duty and holiness, and guard them from spiritual danger and harm. The pious Sunday school teachers of our day may be placed with the catechists of the early Church who taught the catechumens the elementary truths of the gospel and prepared them for baptism. The success of each designated above in winning souls to Christ, and maintaining the Church in purity of faith, is an evidence of the approval of God and of the validity of their office.

The Roman, Greek, and high Anglican view assumes that the Church is a form of organized life imposed upon the Christian society in a sort of outward way. The Protestant view generally held is that the Church is the divinely inspired organic growth of the Christian life; not, therefore, a merely human society, but the society of the faithful constituted by the Divine Spirit. The Roman view makes

the outward form of the Church essential and regards the internal nature as derivative. The Protestant view regards the internal life as the essence, and the outward and visible form as derivative, but both as divinely inspired and constituted.

The Church is a living organism deriving its life from Christ, who alone is its Source and Center. He presides over its interests, is never absent from it, and the Church never dies. What can be said of the merely nominal Christians in the visible Church, who have no vital union with Christ? As spiritual life comes only to believers, it cannot be predicated of the wicked or nonbelieving, though baptized and enrolled in the visible Church. They are fruitless branches of a fruit-bearing vine, which may be suffered to abide until the husbandman shall exercise his right of excision (John 15. 2).

This has always been the condition of the Church. The Donatists of the third and fourth centuries declared against a church in which there was a joint participation in the sacrament of the evil and the good. "What communion," they asked with Saint Paul, "hath light with darkness?" Augustine replied that

though in the Catholic Church the evil were mingled with the good, and the Church was to that extent a mixed body, there was within her "a true *Communio Sanctorum*," in which the evil have no part, and which is not impaired by their presence.

There are certain marks by which the visible Church is distinguished. The number and nature of these differ according to the views held in the definition of the Church. The authorized statement of the Roman view is that they are unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity. The Lutheran Churches abide by the Augsburg Confession (article seven), "That for the unity of the Church nothing more is required than the agreement concerning the doctrines of the Gospels and due administration of the sacraments." The declaration of the Church of England is in its nineteenth article. It limits the "Notes" of the Church to two—the preaching of the pure Word of God and the due administration of the sacraments. By these marks the outward visible Church may be distinguished. But they cannot distinguish individual members as the saints of God. The visible Church is broad and inclusive. "All who approve

themselves believers in Christ; and who whether as adults or children are baptized, belong to the external body, and are entitled to all its privileges. Due respect to the outward and visible Church requires the recognition of all baptized and consistent members of it without demanding personal testimony of conscious experience.”<sup>1</sup>

But the Church has the right and power to clear itself of gross offenders against Christian morality or against its well-defined doctrines. Some formularies add the exercise of discipline as a “Note” or mark of the Church. Purity of life and doctrine could not be maintained without it. The Church of England omits this from its article, but it is found in its Homily for Whitsunday. The Methodist Episcopal Church has it in its General Rules.

The notes or attributes of the Church as held by Roman Catholics are found by Protestants generally only in the universal Church, whose true essence is the invisible Church—the entire number of all true believers throughout the world. In this Church there is a unity of faith (Eph. 4. 13), a unity

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<sup>1</sup>Pope, *Theology*, vol. III, p. 278.

of love (1 Cor. 13. 13), one Spirit (Eph. 4. 4), one hope (Eph. 4. 4), one body (Rom. 12. 5), one Head (Eph. 4. 15), and one object of worship (Eph. 4. 6). That this unity is under one common earthly head is held by Roman Catholics, but denied by Protestants. By the latter a spiritual unity is believed to exist. They differ widely as to church polity, and agree to differ on minor points of doctrine, while they firmly hold the great fundamental truths of Christianity as declared in the Apostles' Creed.

Apostolicity is not held by the great mass of Protestants in the sense in which it is held by Roman Catholics, Prelatists, and High Churchmen. They use the word to designate what is claimed to be an unbroken line of clerical ordinations from the apostles to the present time. Those who hold this view most tenaciously combine with it the opinion that only clergymen who are in the line of this succession are entitled to the pastoral office in the Christian Church; all others are simply usurping the functions of the ministry. When the word is applied to the Church by those who reject apostolical succession, it means the possession by the Church of the apostolic doctrine, spirit, and life.



The only attributes of the Church named in the Apostles' Creed are *holiness* and *catholicity*. From earliest Christian times the Church of Christ has been designated as a holy Church. This was then, and is now, an impressive and important confession. It stands in contrast to the vileness and moral corruption of every passing age. Pagan Rome, judged by the standard of Christ, could hardly be exceeded in vice; but in the midst of this impurity the Christian believer confessed himself called to holiness in heart and life, was constrained to exemplify that holiness in the sight of a sinful world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7. 26). The great design of the coming, the life, death, resurrection and atonement of Christ was to make men holy. Such was the prophecy and promise: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened in the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13. 1).

Holiness is ascribed to the Church by virtue of the holiness of God, and of Christ who founded it, and as expressing the moral purity

of its members, or the purity to which they are called. They are addressed in the New Testament as "saints," "sanctified," by reason of their union with Christ, and the possession of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier (1 Cor. 1. 2); "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3. 17). The members of the Church of Christ are "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2. 9).

This characterization was accepted by the early disciples and carried forward in the earliest Christian literature. They recognized holiness in personal character. Clement of Rome said, "Cleave to the holy, for those who cleave to them shall (themselves) be made holy."<sup>1</sup> There have been saints, or holy persons, in every age of the Christian Church. Its members are called to holiness in heart and life "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1. 4). Holiness in man is evidenced by entire consecration to the service of God; by a compliance with the divine command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

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<sup>1</sup> First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xlvii.

with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12. 30). This holiness, or perfect love, does not include perfection in intellectual processes or faculties. Saints are not free from mistakes in judgment or conduct, or from temptation or liability to sin. "It is not an attainment beyond which there is no progress—a state in which the soul has gained the highest summit of holiness, the greatest reach of perfection; at which its progress will be stopped, and where it will linger in monotonous equipoise through eternity. On the contrary, we exult in the hope and belief of ceaseless progress, of interminable advancement—progress while we live, progress after death."<sup>1</sup>

This view of the possible attainments in holiness of the individual Christian is not new, but is found in the writings of the best divines in all ages since the apostles. Evidence of this is given by the early Christian writers. Clement of Rome exclaims: "Who can declare the bond of the love of God? Who is sufficient to tell the excellence of its beauty as it ought to be told? The height to which love exalts is unspeakable. Love unites us to God. . . . By love have all the elect of

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<sup>1</sup> R. S. Foster, *Christian Purity*, p. 70.

God been made perfect; without love nothing is well pleasing to God.”<sup>1</sup>

Macarius, a member of the Council of Nice (A. D. 325), writes specifically on this subject: “One that is rich in grace, at all times, by night and by day, continues in a perfect state, free and pure, ever captivated with love and elevated to God.” . . . “In like manner Christians, though outwardly they are tempted; yet inwardly are they filled with the divine nature, and so nothing injured.”<sup>2</sup>

In the communion service of the Anglican Church is the following prayer: “Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Because this holiness is a personal work in the hearts of believers *as such*, it can be predicated only of the invisible Church, but it ought to be manifested in the corporate life of the Church in order that it may fulfill its original constitution. There is no Spirit-filled

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<sup>1</sup> First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xlix.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. George Peck, *Christian Perfection*, p. 68.

body called the Church, but only Spirit-filled persons who together make up the Church.

Our hope is in the future; if the ideal holy Church does not appear on earth, it will be found amid the perfections of heaven. Those now separated by time and place, by the imperfections of human knowledge and by death, will be united as one glorious Church without fault before the throne of God.

Catholicity was recognized as an attribute of the Church very early, and is found in the writings of the fathers of the second century. The epistle concerning the martyrdom of Polycarp is addressed to "all the congregations of the Holy Catholic Church." Polycarp when martyred, prayed for the "whole Catholic Church throughout the world."<sup>1</sup> Ignatius speaks of Christ as "the shepherd of the Catholic Church," and his oft-quoted saying is worthy of repetition, "Wherever Jesus Christ is there is the Catholic Church."<sup>2</sup>

The word "Catholic" is not found in the Old or New Testament, but the above quotations show that it was in use in the age immediately succeeding the apostles, and, as Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> Epistle concerning martyrdom of Polycarp, chaps. i, viii, xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle to the Smyrnæans, chap. viii.

Swete remarks, "can claim to have been known to the churches of Asia Minor before the Roman Creed had taken its earliest form."<sup>1</sup> Somewhat later it was frequently used by Tertullian. He speaks of Marcion contributing to the "Catholic Church."<sup>2</sup> About the middle of the fourth century Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, in an exposition of his own Church Creed, said: "In the faith we rehearse is one Holy Catholic Church. It is called Catholic then because it is extended over all the world from one end to the other."<sup>3</sup>

What these fathers meant by the Holy Catholic Church is clear. It was not an invisible, undefined body, but the aggregate of all the Christian congregations, the whole Christian community on earth.

It is evident from the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian that the churches of the West even in the second century had begun to look up to Rome with reverence because that Church, having been founded by Saint Peter, had received at first hand apostolic instruction and benediction.

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<sup>1</sup> The Apostles' Creed, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Against Marcion, Book IV, chap. iv.

<sup>3</sup> Lecture XVIII, section xxii.

It is a matter of doubt whether this affected the sense of the word "Catholic" or influenced its introduction into the Creed. After the second century it was used with increasing frequency as a symbol for "orthodox," and the Catholic Church was limited to those Christian societies which held to apostolic doctrine.

It must be understood that the standard of orthodoxy is the Word of God. The Roman Church has retained the name "Catholic" through the centuries in the exclusive sense in which it was understood when first inserted in the Roman Creed, but she has added other standards to which an enlightened mind and conscience cannot submit.

The Council of Trent passed two decrees concerning the canon of Scripture for "the extirpation of heresy, and the reestablishment of ecclesiastical discipline." The first "declares the holy council receives all the books of the Old and New Testament, as well as all the traditions of the Church respecting faith and morals, as having proceeded from the lips of Jesus Christ, or as having been dictated by the Holy Spirit." The English Reformers placed the Holy Scriptures alone as the foundation and rule of faith. Protestantism threw

off man's authority, solely to put Jesus Christ on the throne of the Church and his Word in the pulpit.

The use of the word "Catholic" as excluding all branches of the Church of Christ which do not acknowledge the authority of the Pope of Rome is an abuse of the term. The Protestant churches of Germany substituted "Christian" for "Catholic" in their version of the Apostles' Creed; the English Reformers very properly retained it; so it remains in the English version as a witness to the continuity of the Reformed Church of England with the Church of the early centuries. "In the midst of the thousand divisions of Christendom it points to the organic unity of the true body of Christ. Among the cries which proclaim the advent of an 'undenominational' and 'unsectarian' Christianity, it witnesses to the preciousness of a definite faith."<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church includes every church organization that retains and maintains the doctrines of the New Testament.

The churches of America retain the word "Catholic." The Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 81.



rejoice in the relation they sustain, through the Anglican Church, to the great historic Church of the early centuries, and their six millions of communicant members recite the Creed every Lord's Day in the order of public worship.<sup>1</sup>

As an attribute of the Church the word "Catholic" in the Creed can bear only its original meaning. It is therefore well to pass over the numerous divisions of the Church of Christ as it appears on the human, earthly side, and take the word in the sense of universal, declaring our belief in a Holy Catholic Church, overleaping the bounds of time and space.

#### THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

This clause stands in connection with the article of "The Holy Catholic Church," to which it is closely related, and declares one of the great facts and privileges of the saints. It is the latest addition to the Creed and is exclusively Western, as it is not found in any of the Eastern Creeds. It first appears in the writings of Nicetas, bishop of Romatiana, in what is now known as Servia, about the year

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<sup>1</sup> See statistics of 1908.

400. It is certain that it was contained in his Creed, and he gave some striking comments on it in the fifth book of his instructions to neophytes.<sup>1</sup>

The tenth article of his creed was, "The Holy Church Catholic, the communion of saints." On this he says: "What is the Church but the congregation of all saints? . . . Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, all the just who have been, are, or shall be, are one Church because, sanctified by one faith and life, marked by one spirit, they constitute one body. . . . Believe, then, that in this one Church thou wilt attain to *the communion of saints*. Know that this is the one Catholic Church established in every region of the earth, whose communion thou oughtest firmly to hold."<sup>2</sup>

When this clause of the Creed was first used in the late fourth and early fifth centuries it was used in two different senses. In the acts of the Council of Nîmes, held in A. D. 394, it was used to denote "participation in holy things"—that is, in the sacraments—but

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<sup>1</sup> NOTE.—Professor Hahn and Dr. McGiffert ascribe it to Nicetas of Aquileia about the year 458. Professor Zahn and Dr. A. E. Burn ascribe it to Niceas or Nicetas, bishop of Romatiana about the year 400.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. A. E. Burn, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 95.

Nicetas understood it of holy persons, the saints and believers of all times, and the angels of heaven.

What was the exact meaning attached to it when it was made a part of the Creed is not known, but it was probably used in both senses. The blessings, or good things received in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, have been recognized by believers in all ages. Those who have been "born again," "born of water and of the Spirit," and who have had "communion of the body and blood of Christ" have entered the kingdom of God, and those in heaven and earth are but one family.

The meaning attached to this clause by the Christians of the early centuries may be of curious interest, but of no special value; a more important and practical question is, What does it mean to us? It is capable of several interpretations. According to the Roman Catholic definition, it is the "union between the Church triumphant, the Church militant, and the Church suffering in purgatory. These three form the one body of which Christ is the visible Head. Its members are united by mutual communications of intercessions and prayers" (Bergier).

The English divines have written largely upon the subject. Bishop Pearson's work is the most voluminous and remarkable. The following points are elaborated by him at great length: The saints have communion with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. They have communion also with the holy angels, and with one another, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. They commune also with the saints departed out of this life and admitted to the presence of God.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Wilson, in the Bampton Lectures for 1851, says, "While the Romish view is unscriptural, that of Pearson and others is vague." His view is that the bond of union denoted by the "communion of saints" is not to be sought (1) in identity of doctrinal beliefs, or (2) in identity of religious feeling or experience, or (3) in identity of forms of church government in worship, but in moral unity, founded in the action of the grace of God not merely in the hearts, but in the activities of Christians.

The bond of union is not in the Confession of Faith to which we subscribe, or in the use of the sacraments, but in the grace of God in

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<sup>1</sup> Exposition of the Creed, pp. 524-537.

the heart. When saving faith in Jesus Christ is exercised, sins are forgiven, the soul is regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Ghost and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, then we are united to Christ and his Church by a bond of communion and fellowship which nothing but sin can sever. The Holy Spirit does not bear witness to a Creed, but to an experience.

We commune with the Father in prayer, in song, and meditation; the soul gathers new strength and God reveals himself to his people. We commune with the Son: we meditate upon his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and glorification. His amazing love appeals to us and our hearts burn within us as he talks with us by the way. We commune with the Holy Spirit; he is in our hearts; he takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. Thus the triune God receives our adoration, praise, and love, and communes with us. He says, "I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims" (Exod. 25. 22).

That is the place where God comes to the saintly soul. At the mercy seat, the soul soars

as on eagle's wings, no longer held down by sensible objects or ambitions; faith is in lively exercise, heaven is open, the invisible appears, glory crowds back the shadows of earth, and the saint holds audience with Deity.

The saints have communion one with another. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1. 5).

The Lord's Supper is a holy communion. It is in remembrance of the supreme act of the Son of God, inspired by a love which in depth and intensity can have no parallel. So also must its fruit be in us. Love is the basis of the communion of saints.

There is a blessed communion in good works between saint and saint. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6. 10). Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the distressed, wherever they are found, but especially search for those belonging to the great family of which God is the Father and Christ the Elder Brother.

There is a communion in Christian activi-

ties between, or in conjunction with, the several branches of the one true Church. This has never been more fully developed or more manifest than in the present generation. The Protestant section of the Church of Christ, though divided into numerous denominations, is, in many charitable and religious institutions, one. Bible Societies for the free distribution of God's Word are supported by all Protestant denominations. So, to a large extent, are Christian missions in foreign countries. They are laying aside denominational names and ambitions, and are working together as one to advance the kingdom of God—a communion of labor, sacrifice, success, and reward. Where there is no union of organization there is a strong bond of communion in a common life of grace and a common love.

The saints of earth have communion with angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1. 14, R. V.) Angels do not reveal themselves to our senses only in exceptional cases, and science cannot project itself into the realm they occupy. But divine revelation, whose province it is to unfold what man could never

know, has given some facts upon which we base our conceptions of angelic beings. They are sent to minister to the heirs of salvation. The saints of God are encircled with the heavenly powers. "The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34. 7).

The communion of saints is a communion of saints on earth and in heaven, of angels and men, of men already perfected and crowned, and of men seeking and living for the crown which God has prepared for those who love him.



## ARTICLE X

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

THIS article is found in all Creeds and is adapted to the wants of all generations. The sinful condition of man is recognized in every part of divine revelation and forgiveness of sin is the greatest boon the gospel brings him.

The great deliverance that Jesus came to effect was not deliverance from Roman vassalage, unjust taxation, or oppressive government, but deliverance from sin, which implied pardon for past offenses, dominion over sin, and power to comply with the will of God, and live free from condemnation.

Forgiveness is taught in the tenderest of all parables, that of the prodigal son. Jesus also practiced forgiveness. To the paralytic let down through the roof he said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He confirmed the moral miracle by a miracle of healing, and thus attested the validity of his claim, that the Son of man had authority on earth to forgive sins. To the woman in the house of Simon, who bowed in penitence and shame at his feet, he said,

"Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace." Jesus died that men might be forgiven; he gave his life a ransom for many. He was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. In the institution of the Holy Sacrament he associated his death with the remission of sins, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28).

In the Epistles the passages alluding to this are numerous. Peter gave the keynote at Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2. 38). John gives this forceful declaration and promise, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1. 9).

This doctrine was familiar to the early Church fathers before it was embodied in any formal Creed: Clement of Rome writes, "Blessed are we, beloved, if we keep the commandments of God in the harmony of love; that so through love our sins may be forgiven us."<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr says, "But there is no

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<sup>1</sup> First Epistle, chap. 1.

other way than this—to become acquainted with this Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins.”<sup>1</sup>

Irenæus writes: “Rightly then does His Word say to man, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.’ He, the same against whom we had sinned in the beginning, grants forgiveness in the end.”<sup>2</sup>

Forgiveness of sin is not speculative but experimental—a blessing obtained and enjoyed now in our everyday life. It is not merely for the few; it is the common privilege of every believer in Christ. Millions of Christian men and women rejoice in this conscious salvation. They know that Christ has set them free from the law of sin and death.

The forgiveness of sins has been called “The greatest of all the gifts of grace.” Man knows not how to estimate the value, nor in what terms to declare the magnitude of God’s gifts, but we know that his only begotten Son was the one great gift which includes all other gifts of grace. And having knowledge of this, we can be assured of all other needful blessings. He with his Son will freely give us all things. Much has been said in argument

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<sup>1</sup> Dialogue with Trypho, chap. xliv.

<sup>2</sup> Against Heresies, Book V, chap. xvii.

and illustration on the doctrine of sin and its forgiveness, involving the abstruse doctrine of atonement; but the fact of sin is readily granted, and the doctrine of forgiveness is readily received by the ordinary mind. The mysteries involved are not on the human side, and man need not vex himself concerning their solution. Man's sinful condition and his need of forgiveness are universally felt. God has provided a remedy suited to his condition and equal to his need; it is offered to all on condition of repentance toward God and faith in Christ. This is so plain that it can be easily understood by any grade of intelligence above responsibility, and it is richly enjoyed by millions of God's people. True forgiveness involves a perfect knowledge of the offense and a perfect restoration to love. These are met by the infinite knowledge and love of God. Whatever difficulties science or philosophy may seem to throw around the doctrine of forgiveness, these cannot exceed the power, wisdom, and mercy of God. The pardoning power must be held by the Governor of the universe. It is wise in man to accept the benefit of Christ's atonement by fulfilling the conditions under which it is offered without ques-

tioning the exact manner in which it is procured.

While the fact of sin is readily admitted, the nature of sin is not so easily understood. What is sin? Augustine defined sin as "any thought, word, or deed against the law of God," and his definition is largely followed. There is a "sin unto death," and a "sin not unto death." There are sins against one's self and against one's fellow men, but every sin is a sin against God. There are sins of omission and sins of commission; the former the omission of some commanded duty, and the latter the commission of some deed forbidden.

"Sin is more than dominion of body over spirit; more than an accident of growth; more than a result of undeveloped judgment, tinged with emotion and applied to questions of motives and conduct. Sin is the abnormal; sin is a variant from standard; sin is self-will and selfishness throttling duty. Where men accept a God it is opposition to his law and government. If no personal God be believed in, then sin is willful opposition to the course of nature and to law, as proved by experience. So, in every case, it is unworthy, injurious, and

guilty, and must be repented of and atoned for. The doctrine of sin will never be essentially disturbed.”<sup>1</sup>

Saint John says, “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3. 4). This implies the existence of law imposed by some authoritative lawgiver. God made man in his own image and endowed him with reason, speech, a moral nature, and the power of choice between right and wrong; between what he will do and what he will leave undone.

As our being, with all its faculties and powers, is the gift of God, he rightfully demands our perfect loyalty to himself, our love and obedience. Man was therefore placed under law. Jesus Christ gave in few words a summary of the law: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22. 37-40). “God is love,” and the end of man’s being is to be like God, to have his will in perfect harmony with the divine will, and so to glorify

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop D. A. Goodsell, *Things that Remain*, p. 46.

God and enjoy him forever. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13. 10). Where there is no love sin exists. The great distinction of heaven is the rule of love, and that of the place of the lost is its utter absence.

Sin as a condition of humanity is universal, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3. 23). And the knowledge of sin is as universal as sin itself. This knowledge comes by the law revealed and by the law written upon man's heart. It is impossible for men to see or feel the enormity and turpitude of sin without help from God. God beholds it from the viewpoint of absolute holiness. It is the province of the Holy Spirit to convict men of sin. Reason may convince them of truth, and the Spirit of God by the application of truth convicts the heart; then sin is seen in some degree as it is seen by God. Sometimes it becomes an intolerable burden, weighs heavily upon the soul, and life is made miserable. The soul looks for a remedy, but the world can supply none, and the soul cries out, "O where shall rest be found?"

The words of Christ are an answer to the soul's cry, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

(Matt. 11. 28). There is real meaning in these words. They are not a rhetorical exaggeration, but the assurance of a blessed fact. Christianity is adequate to the wants of sinful men. It was for this purpose that the whole plan of human salvation was formed and executed. Here is the remedy for a sin-cursed race. Repentance and faith bring forgiveness; by baptism, which is an external manifestation of an internal justifying faith already existing, we are admitted to the Church of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are sanctified and equipped for the duties of the Christian life.

The forgiveness of sins is a doctrine of divine revelation; it could not be otherwise known. God alone could determine the terms on which sinful man could be forgiven and the moral government of God be maintained. The fact and terms of forgiveness are so explicitly stated it is sinful to doubt. The purpose of Christ's coming and his power to save were declared before his birth, and at the end of his redemptive work he said, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luke 24. 47). The force and efficacy of this is corroborated



by experience. The whole Church is a community of forgiven men and women; the consciousness of the Church is the consciousness of sins forgiven, and those who are in the Church without this consciousness are living beneath their privilege. When the conditions are complied with all may rest in peace on the promises of God.

Is there any sin that lies beyond the forgiving mercy of God? There is a sin called "the unpardonable sin." "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12. 31, 32).

Upon this serious passage John Wesley has written: "How immense is the number in every nation, throughout the Christian world, of those who have been more or less distressed on account of this scripture! . . . How is it possible that anyone who reads his Bible can one hour remain in doubt concerning it,

when our Lord himself has so clearly told us what that blasphemy is? 'He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit' (Mark 3. 29, 30). This, then, and this alone, is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: the saying, he had an unclean spirit; the affirming that Christ wrought his miracles by the power of an evil spirit; or, more particularly, that 'he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils.'"<sup>1</sup> It is well to have a fear of speaking contemptuously of God or of divine things; to do so is dangerously near to an unpardonable sin.

It is worthy of observation that no one who believes in the divine mission of Christ can commit this sin, and the fear of doing so is proof of freedom from it. Forgiveness of sin is an act of God's free grace by which, in virtue of Christ's atonement, appropriated by faith, he frees the sinner from the guilt and penalty of his sins, and accepts him as righteous for Christ's sake. This involves two things, perfect reconciliation and remission of penalty. It is only in a limited degree that remission of penalty can be exercised. Sin

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<sup>1</sup> Works, vol. II, p. 246.

in every form is a violation of law, and law requires its penalty to the uttermost; whether it be retributive or reformatory, it must be paid.

Violation of the physical laws of our being brings its own punishment, and there can be no remission. And frequently the penalty does not end with the guilty one, but is entailed upon posterity to succeeding generations. But the penalty of sin consisting in estrangement from God and banishment from his presence, with all which that implies, is remitted, and the soul "washed in the blood of the Lamb" spends an eternity with God. "In Christ there was unclouded vision of men's infirmities, and un-failing sympathy with men. *The Son of man*—because he was the Son of man—had power on earth to forgive sins. In his own Person he fulfilled the will of God. In his own Person he fulfilled the destiny of man. And whosoever is *in him* shares the virtue of his life. By such a union the evil of the past is done away, and the crowning miracle of finite existence is accomplished. By such a union there is true forgiveness of sins."<sup>1</sup>

Reconciliation is an essential thing in the

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<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *Historic Faith*, p. 58.

forgiveness of God. The gospel plan is a "ministry of reconciliation." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2. Cor. 5. 19).

The conditions upon which forgiveness is granted are plainly stated. Repentance is an absolute prerequisite. Evangelical repentance is preceded by conviction which includes a deep sorrow for sin, a hatred and renunciation of it.

A forgiving spirit in the heart of the seeker is also a condition of God's forgiveness. This is emphasized by repetition in the New Testament. In the prayer taught by our Lord, so frequently upon our lips, we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6. 12). To make it more impressive Jesus expands the thought: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (verses 14, 15). In this prayer we designate the measure of forgiveness we implore by that which we give to our fellows. Forgiveness of our fellow men implies love in our hearts, for we cannot love God

and hate our brother; and to be in love with our neighbor is the best test of our love to God. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6. 37). Our forgiveness of others does not entitle us to pardon; forgiveness comes to us as a free gift of God through the merits of the atonement of Christ. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel."

Can we know our sins forgiven? This is important; the fact must be known or the effect cannot follow. The doctrine of absolution as held by the different branches of the Church of Christ differs in important particulars. In the Roman Church the priest is judge as well as minister, and decides the moral fitness of the penitent to receive absolution. When confession is made, and proper conditions are complied with, absolution is pronounced. In the form employed these words occur, "As the minister of Jesus Christ I remit thy sins." For this Protestants contend there is no warrant in Scripture.

When Christ says to his ministers, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained," he imparts to them a commission to declare

with authority the Christian terms of pardon, and he also gives them a power of inflicting ecclesiastical censures; that is of admitting into a Christian congregation or of excluding from it.

In the Greek Church, "Penitence is a sacrament in which he who confesses his sins is, on the outward declaration of pardon by the priest, inwardly absolved from his sins by Jesus Christ himself." The deprecatory form is used, "May the Lord absolve thee."<sup>1</sup>

The Church of England also holds the doctrine of absolution, but restrains herself to what she supposes to be the scriptural limits within which the power is granted, which are the pronouncing God's forgiveness of sins upon the supposition of the existence of that state of mind to which forgiveness is granted.

In the Protestant Episcopal Church "absolution is given in public, to the whole congregation at once, on the condition that they are truly penitent, and solely in the name and by the authority of God."<sup>2</sup> "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5. 21.) God has not made his ministers judges of the heart but declarers of his truth. He has said, and

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<sup>1</sup> See McClintock and Strong and Stanley's History of the Eastern Church, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Brownell, Comment on Prayer Book, p. 73.

therefore commissioned them to say, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10. 9). When these conditions are met salvation is enjoyed. The work of the Spirit on the heart, which is called regeneration, is concomitant with the forgiveness of sin.

What evidences follow? The negative side is the removal of the burden of guilt; the positive side is the filling of the soul with peace. The justified one is adopted into the family of God, and the Spirit is given as a witness of adoption.

The believer has a bright, stimulating hope that cheers; he will not live in constant fear that he will fail to enter heaven, but with the full assurance of hope will press his way onward, declaring his confident trust in Christ. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1. 12).

The character is radically changed, the Spirit of Christ controls, sin hath no more dominion over him; he is joyful in tribulation, patient in suffering, meek under provocation;

he has been taken "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God"; he has received "forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified" (Acts 26. 18).

Happiness is a distinguishing characteristic of a saved soul. The man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea, whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account, and whose heart is emptied of sin and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man. He has now left the unrepentant and unforgiven world, is numbered with the sons of God, and lives in joyful expectancy of reaching the place and state of the saints in glory.

The Holy Scriptures, observation, and experience confirm this article of the Christian Creed. May it ring on down the ages to the end of time!—"I believe in the forgiveness of sins."



## ARTICLE XI

### THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

THIS article has never been wanting in any form of the Apostles' Creed, but has differed somewhat in words if not in meaning. In the old Roman Creed it was "*carnis resurrectionem*"—"resurrection of the flesh." In ancient and modern times this has been regarded by some as too materialistic to accord with Holy Scripture. Origen among the early fathers, and Harnack and others among modern writers, contend that it is not according to the teaching of Saint John or Saint Paul. They quote the words of Christ as given by Saint John, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6. 63), and the words of Paul, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15. 50). The phrase "resurrection of the flesh" is not found in Scripture, but was early adopted in contending against those who denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. One of the principal doctrines of the Manichees was that, "In obedience to the divine command, Christ

appeared among the Jews clothed with a shadowy form of a human body, and not with the real substance." The resurrection of Christ and the general resurrection were denied. At an early age some writers used the word "body" as a substitute for the word "flesh." Jerome complained of John of Jerusalem and said, "When you deal with the resurrection the word 'body' is used nine times, and 'flesh' not once." Rufinus, contemporary with Jerome, makes it more emphatic by the addition of a word, making the Creed of Aquileia differ from the old Roman, and writes it "*huius carnis resurrectionem*"—"resurrection of *this* flesh." In his comment on the Creed, Rufinus argues against the Valentinians and the Manicheans, who denied the resurrection of the flesh; he placed the Omnipotence of God against all the difficulties that could possibly arise.

The phrase "resurrection of the flesh," though not biblical, is very ancient and of high authority. There is no reason to doubt that it had established itself in the Roman symbol by the middle of the second century. In the fourth century it began to be changed in the Eastern churches, but has always been re-

tained in the great churches of the West. The Anglican Church uses three forms. In the Creed of the Eucharist she says, "I look for the resurrection of the dead." In the interrogative creed in the baptismal service she says, "Dost thou believe . . . the resurrection of the flesh?" In the Apostles' Creed of the daily offices she has substituted "the resurrection of the body." The three forms are understood to have substantially the same meaning, but each may teach a separate and important lesson. "Each phrase has its own contribution to make to the fullness of the truth, while each needs to be guarded or supplemented by the other two." "The 'resurrection of the dead' brings before the mind the vision of the general resurrection, at which 'all that are in their graves . . . shall come forth.' The 'resurrection of the body' witnesses to the restoration of the individual life. The 'resurrection of the flesh' proclaims the continuity of the restored life with that which has gone before."<sup>1</sup>

In the morning service of the Protestant Episcopal Church the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are used interchangeably at the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 98.

option of the minister; in one we have the phrase "the resurrection of the body," in the other, "the resurrection of the dead."

The Methodist Episcopal Church uses only the present text of the Apostles' Creed.

The doctrine of the resurrection, both as to fact and form, was seriously questioned in apostolic times, before the close of the canon of Holy Scripture. This called forth that magnificent treatise of Saint Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he answered the questions, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15. 35.) To Timothy he named some "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already" (2 Tim. 2. 18). They regarded it as nothing more than the spiritual recovery of man's dead soul to life, a purely spiritual change. The same error has appeared at different times. Polycarp, writing to the Philippians, tells them to avoid those who "say there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment."<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr says to Trypho, "If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, . . . who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. vii.

that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven, do not imagine that they are Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

Saint Paul bases the doctrine of the resurrection on the fact of the resurrection of Christ: “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished” (1 Cor. 15. 16-18). It is a most blessed truth that the destiny of man is closely united to Jesus Christ. As surely as the Lord Jesus arose from the dead, so surely shall all men arise. “He brought back his body from the grave, and became thus the ‘Captain of Salvation,’ the restorer of the captives, the conqueror of death for all men.”<sup>2</sup> “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15. 20-22).

What a glorious truth is here asserted! Not only is Christ risen, but he is the firstfruits of

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<sup>1</sup> Chap. lxxx.

<sup>2</sup> The Creed and Modern Thought, p. 390.

them that slept, the first sheaf gathered from the great harvest field of death, the first trophy won from death's dominions, the beginning of a long line of those destined to arise out of death's sleep to life eternal. The great Head of humanity leads the way up from the tomb and opens the gate for all our race. As the first sheaf gathered and presented, under the Mosaic law, as a thank offering to God was the pledge and assurance of the ingathering of the whole harvest, so the resurrection of Christ is a pledge and proof of the resurrection of the whole race. We have, on the most incontrovertible evidence, the sublime fact of an actual, literal resurrection as the consummation of the redemptive work of the Son of God.

The resurrection of Christ is often used to impress spiritual and experimental truth upon the hearts of believers, so that a proper consideration of his resurrection, and a firm faith in it as a great historical fact and a sublime doctrine of the Scriptures, may have a salutary effect upon the moral and spiritual life.

A close attention to what is recorded of the resurrection of Christ will aid us in understanding the nature of the general resurrec-

tion, as his resurrection was the pledge of ours. The resurrection of Christ is the supreme miracle of the Christian dispensation. There are mysteries connected with it which we cannot fully understand, but we are assured that it is not beyond the power or province of Almighty God. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you [or any objector] that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26. 8.) God is able to do it and has promised to do it. Since the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of a dead human body has become a well-authenticated historical fact, attested "by many infallible proofs." Because of this the followers of Christ believe that they also will "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3. 11). "For our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3. 20, 21). "Our vile body"—the body of our humiliation, our weakness, corruption, and mortality—shall be changed.

The inspired writers were not in doubt

about this; to them it was a certainty. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John. 3. 2). When he shall be manifested in his glorified human nature at the Judgment Day we shall be like him. He was desirous that all his disciples should see him when glorified: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17. 24).

In the glorified body of Christ we see what the human body can become, and this indicates a glorious destiny for man. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15. 49).

The glorified body of Christ is the type or specimen into whose likeness the bodies of the saints are to be transformed. How this is to be done we do not know; it is not important that we should. This is only one of the vast number of unknown things that lie along the line that divides the natural from the supernatural. Paul recognized no impossibility. It was as mysterious to him as to us; but over against the mystery he placed the wisdom and power of God, to whom all things are possible.



He knew that Christ had died; he also knew that Christ was alive; he had seen him, and the glory that shone from his divine personality was brighter than the noonday sun (Acts 9. 3). He did not know the process by which the dead body of Christ was changed and fitted for another kind of life. That change was probably wrought in a moment. There was no time for the decay of the sacred body; only one day lay between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. So will it be at the coming of the Son of God. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15. 51, 52).

The *process* of the change of those who die will differ from that of those "who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." Some will have been dead for untold ages, and the dust scattered to the four winds of heaven, while others will hear with the living natural ear "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," but the change will be the same. In both cases it will be from a weak, mortal, dishonored, natural body to a glorified, powerful, undying, spiritual body.

The qualities and powers of a glorified

spiritual body we cannot fully conceive or estimate. We may form some idea by the powers of our risen Lord. He was not bound to the limits of the terrestrial or the known laws that govern matter. He entered the room where his disciples were assembled when the door was shut. Solid walls were no barrier to his movements; he appeared in natural form, and conversed with some of them, and in a moment vanished from their sight. He made himself visible or invisible, shaped himself outwardly according to the internal will. Thus it was until the ascension, when his transformation was complete, and he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

“We shall be like him”; our spiritual bodies will not be bound down to the limits of the earth; we may go here and there with the rapidity and ease of thought. This is possible because the body is spiritualized through and through; it has become an expression of the spirit, and its willing instrument. This is what the Scriptures call a “spiritual body,” in contradistinction to the natural body.

On the nature of the spiritual body eminent scholars and theologians differ; the full mean-

ing of the resurrection itself and all that it implies will never be known until after it is past; but this should not cause doubt as to the fact, nor lessen the enjoyment of our "hope toward God, . . . that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24. 15).

The spiritual body will be of such material and form as will perfectly fit it to serve the spirit in its higher, nobler, imperishable existence; a body that shall be no burden, require no care, no replenishment. It is spiritual in that it is conformed to the spirit, developing and helping the spirit in all its operations. Paul brings several of its attributes into view.

Its imperishability. Though matter, it shall flourish coeval with the inhabiting spirit. No weapons can smite it, no pain enter it, no form of death reach it. It will be a body endowed and pervaded with all the salient and springing energies of life, defying the action of time and all other powers but the fiat of the Almighty. And God's promise is that it shall stand as it rose, incorruptible forever—the mortal hath put on immortality.

Its honor. A body, not mean and depressed or unattractive, but having all noble and at-

tractive qualities; in aspect of beauty and splendor like Christ's glorious body, of which men have caught some glimpses, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, when "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17. 2). Jesus said this should come to his people at the end of the world: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13. 43). They are often obscured here, but there they shall *shine out*. "Heaven is the firmament in which every luminary is a sun."

Its power. It was laid in the grave absolutely helpless, its every faculty perished; it shall be "raised in power." It may have great power of achievement, of producing physical and moral effects. Angels are represented as having such power, and as using it at the command of God, "His angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psa. 103. 20). So the redeemed will have power, "For they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20. 36, R. V.). They will have power to do, to achieve, to serve God, and to endure "the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory."

It may be a power of quick transition. We may pass from world to world as readily as we do now from house to house. This will widen the scope of our knowledge and the circle of our fellowship, since these may be diffused through all space where dwells a single pure and loyal subject.

What opportunities will be afforded us to study as well as to serve God! The universe thrown open to us, immensity our schoolroom, our term eternity; ever acquiring knowledge and yet retaining it, and all our garnered treasures of truth and knowledge, baptized with the spirit of holiness, shall serve as fuel to feed the flame of love to God—the spirit ever loving and the body ever aiding in the spirit's utmost ardor and perpetuity of love. Such is the high and holy destiny of God's people.

Our loved ones, and pious friends, and the great champions of the Church of God who have fallen asleep in Jesus, will be there, and we shall see them on the morning of the resurrection: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. . . . Then we which are alive and remain shall be

caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4. 14-17).

The doctrine of the resurrection includes all mankind. The resurrection of the wicked is expressly taught: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5. 28, 29, R. V.).

There must necessarily be a great difference between the resurrection body of the saint and that of the sinner. The attributes of *spirit* may belong to both, as in the case of an angel of light and an angel of darkness; but the purity, the moral glory, the holy aspiration, the glowing love, will be present with the saved and absent from the unsaved. We must not be wise above what is written. The future of the unsaved in many respects is shrouded in mystery. Theirs will be "a resurrection unto judgment," but the Scriptures preserve an ominous silence as to the nature of the resurrection body of those who in this life have not chosen God and spiritual things.

The mysteries connected with the resurrection both of the just and the unjust we must leave to the mind of God, and gratefully accept that which he has revealed. He has not revealed enough to satisfy our curiosity, but enough to justify our faith. Our instincts tell us that death is critical, and has a determining power on our destinies. We cannot evade it; we may neglect but we cannot diminish its importance. We should therefore prepare for it by the removal of guilt and condemnation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. We can then forecast the joy of complete triumph, and say with Paul, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15. 55-57).

## ARTICLE XII

### AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING

THIS article is not found in any of the early Creeds. It was not established in the Apostles' Creed till about the middle of the seventh century. The Constantinopolitan (Nicene) Creed (A. D. 325 and 381) and the Athanasian Creed included the doctrine of the future life. The first says, "I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." The second reads, "And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

The words "everlasting" and "eternal" occur frequently in the New Testament, and are used by the translators interchangeably as having precisely the same meaning. It was an acknowledged principle with the translators of the King James version that where there are more words than one in our language having the same meaning it is well to employ sometimes one, sometimes another. An example is found in Matthew 25. 46. "These shall go



away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." The revised version gives the passage thus, "These shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." This latter is the more correct rendering, as in the original Greek the same adjective is applied to both "punishment" and "life."

The language of the New Testament and that of the Creeds differ somewhat, but the meaning is the same: that there is another mysterious life after this natural life is ended, and that future life is not measured by terms of time, but is eternal. The certainty of that life is the faith of the Christian Church.

The addition of this article to the Apostles' Creed was quite natural and proper. It would make the Creed more perfect and significant. It is the last but not the least; it is the one article that makes all the others rational and important. The present life determines the nature of the future.

Without faith in immortality we lack an important element of inspiration to duty. "If we have only hope in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15. 19, R. V.). But we have hope and joy in "our

Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1. 10, R. V.).

This language of Paul is very significant. Immortality was not primarily revealed to men by Jesus Christ, but was brought into a new light, made more manifest, so that the simplest minds could grasp the fact and rest on his authoritative teaching.

We cannot point to a time when it was in any sense new, or to any race among whom it was unknown. If it were possible for us to divest our minds of all thoughts and influences derived from the Bible, we would still find in man's soul, as evidence of immortality, longings for a future life. Without these man would be imperfect. The divine instincts of the soul show themselves in these yearnings; they are the outgoings of the nature that God has planted within us. As all natural wants point to their correlatives in nature, so do these longings of the soul for continued existence point to an immortal life. They are found among the least civilized of our race, and are clearly and eloquently expressed by those who have reached the highest degree of civilization uninfluenced by Christian teach-

ing. The conceptions of Socrates were noble and elevated; in the spirit world he would hold converse with the wise and good, and with the great dead of his own historic time. Plato, his disciple, sought by argument to establish the doctrine of immortality. He distinguished what is corporeal from the soul, which he considered to be an eternal self-acting agency; and to him we owe the first attempt toward demonstrating its immortality.

Cicero, a hundred years before Christ, wrote, "I am well convinced, then, that my dear departed friends are so far from having ceased to live that the state they now enjoy can alone with propriety be called life."

Under the teachings of Christ a peculiar significance attaches to immortality, conveyed in the words "eternal life." It is not simply continued conscious existence, but a life deriving its inspiration from a knowledge of God. To properly understand the article under consideration, life everlasting must be put in contrast to everlasting punishment. This is a phase of doctrine peculiar to the New Testament. It can be seen that men have reasonable conceptions of an immortal existence without a knowledge of the Holy

Scriptures. Bishop Butler argues that even an atheist can have no reasonable ground for the denial of a future life. "For, that we are to live hereafter," he writes, "is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is: and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme, that there can be no future state."<sup>1</sup> The contrast between eternal life and eternal death is momentous, but continued conscious existence is implied in both. Life itself is a wonder, and in its deepest principles inexplicable; its origin and continuity are among the deep mysteries which science has never fathomed. God is the fountain and giver of all life.

When we contemplate eternal life after the death of the body the mystery deepens. Eternity! Who can understand it? Who can form any adequate conception of it? A duration not characterized or measured by any attributes of time; we find nothing analogous to it in the whole compass of creation; it is incomprehensible to all finite beings.

While the life everlasting belongs to the future, it must not be forgotten that in its

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<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, Part I, chap. i.

essence it is inseparably connected with our present life. Our original relation to God was changed by sin; our restoration by Jesus Christ to the original relation brings with it spiritual and eternal life: "The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6. 23, R. V.). Eternal life comes to us, not of merit, not of wages, but the free gift of God in Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3. 36, R. V.). This presents to us the subjective aspect of Christianity. The believer hath everlasting life. Eternal life is now implanted in principle and germ within him and shall blossom out in its fullness and glory when the soul inhabits the spiritual body of the resurrection.

In two passages of Holy Scripture we have a description of "the life eternal." To hold these firmly is to be saved from many perplexities which accompany all attempts to define further that which we have no power to define. "This is life eternal, that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,

and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5. 20, R. V.).

"This eternal life commences when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts, when we first know Christ, being enabled to 'call him Lord by the Holy Spirit,' when we can testify, our consciences bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, 'The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.'"

The power to accomplish the redemption of the human race was given to Jesus Christ; for this he died on the cross and paid the price of salvation for all who believe, accept, and obey. This salvation is called life because the souls of men were dead in trespasses and sins, and Christ quickens them by his word and Spirit, and henceforth they live to the honor and glory of God. This new spiritual life reaches beyond the limits of time, and is a life ever living—an eternal life.

Of these things Christ by his Holy Spirit has given the believer "an understanding," a far greater illumination than was ever enjoyed before; the Son who is in the bosom of the Father hath declared him unto us. And

this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5. 11, 12).

When the mind and body are in a normal state the very name of life is sweet, and nothing on earth is more desirable. "Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." *Life* in this article of the Creed is of momentous significance, the life of the soul with God, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This saving knowledge increases with passing years. "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1. 2-4, R. V.).

This knowledge of God and of Christ is experimental; we become partakers of the divine nature. Christianity, by the Divine Presence in us, makes us like God in holiness, love,

and all the characteristics of his moral nature. This is Christian perfection.

The attainment of this knowledge and grace on earth prepares us for the fullness of eternal life in heaven. It is a state of highest dignity and glory, of sweetest comfort and joy; of joy full in measure, pure in quality, perpetual in derivation, perfect in all respects to the utmost capacity of our nature—a full realization of the beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

This article of “The Life Everlasting” comes after that of “The Resurrection of the Body.” So the full enjoyment of eternal life in the world to come must be in the resurrection body, when all our parts and faculties have been raised to the highest perfection. We shall be free from all corruptibility and decay, from all defilement and deformity; we shall be incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual. We shall see Christ as he is and be like him.

Our souls in their nature will be perfected; the understanding being full of light, the mind will be filled with the knowledge of truth. Our affections will expand and cling only to the pure and good; the smile of God will be upon us, and we shall enjoy the gracious presence



of God, of Christ, of angels, and of the spirits of the just made perfect.

The saints in glory will come to the fullest knowledge of the triune God that the finite mind is capable of obtaining; and from this knowledge will come an abiding peace, an ecstatic joy, and supreme satisfaction. Fellowship with Him who made us, union with Him who redeemed us, the everlasting cordial company of Him who sanctified us: what glory, what dignity, what happiness can be imagined for man greater than this? Free from all possibility of sin, of sorrow, and of death, assured of an eternal life with God, in whose presence there is fullness of joy; and at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

“I BELIEVE . . . THE LIFE EVERLASTING.  
AMEN”

All that is promised is certain, all that is declared is true, all that is desired is emphasized: Amen, so may it be.

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